



**CONSTANT FRUSTRATION
BUT NEVER GONNA CRACK
ALREADY INSTITUTIONALIZED,
SO I THOUGHT THAT WAS THAT
HANDCUFFED AND HEADED BACK TO MY CELL
CONSTANTLY THINKING,
“WHAT DID I DO? WHAT THE HELL?”**

CHECK OUT THE REST OF VAGO'S POW ON PAGE 4



EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 11.41

Here we are in mid/late-October, forty plus Beat issues into the year, can you believe it? What a year it has been for us, and for you. We hope the remainder of 2006 and 2007 is better than what you have gone through thus far in 2006. No joke. We have no idea what must be going through your heads when it comes to making the choices you made to be put behind bars. We know we definitely have no desire to relive our teenage (and for some, adult) years the way you have lived yours thus far. Don't take this as a-disrespect, we're sure you feel the same way too, if you could change the way things have turned out in your life.

It's a trip for us to see, while we are in the hall doing workshops, how comfortable many of you are in these juvenile hall facilities. You appear to be too comfortable with counselors, joking around and talking shhh to the counselors, and then have no problem when a counselor switches up and begins slinging orders your way. There you are in your khaki pants and sweatshirt (or whatever color combinations various halls provide), being told when to sit down, where to line-up, how to stand, when to come out of your box, when to eat, when to play, when to put it on quiet, when you can have a visit with your mother, your blood, your kin etc. etc.! What's wrong with this picture? You have handed over your freedom to the juvenile justice system, youngstas! You have given the system — a huge, huge institution — the power to become your parents, your alleged protectors, the ones who will guide you down a dark lonely path full of regret, if you do not put on the brakes and get the hell on the right track soon. (BTW, if you don't know by now, they're terrible guides).

Can we ask, what was wrong with your parents' rules? Can we ask what's wrong with freedom? Can we ask, why couldn't you put the joint/blunt down? Can we ask, why didn't you go to school? Can we ask why you chose to hold that bundle of dope? Can we ask why you didn't learn from those close and dear who have fallen prey to the game, the gang, the drugs and alcohol? Can we ask why did you join a gang with all it's bullshhh politics, against your parents' desire for you to simply go to school, join a soccer team, come home, have a part-time job, have good friends, and keep your teenage years simple, instead of complicating matters as many of you have done?

Well, you can't turn back the hands of time, so what must one do? Definitely do not reinforce the lifestyle that brought you to jail, although too many do just that. It is way easy for this editor to go off on "making a change." Instead, we'll say you have a choice in the matter. It's time to step up, young person, and make a life-altering decision. It's time to take a stand against drugs. It's time to take a stand against negative living. It's time to take a stand and be you! Yeah you! Meaning, you have a voice, use it. Forget the homies, the varrio, the drugs and alcohol; speak up and act on what it is you want for you in life. And if you want this life, then you are on the right track, but if you want change, then the time is now to get on the "freedom train."

What is the freedom train, you ask. Well, by jumping on board this train you are determined to see and do your part in the elimination of prejudice, discrimination, racism, poverty, and violence from your community, and in bringing about a new and improved outlook based upon love, peace, freedom, equality, and justice for all.

Big change is not easy, but if you are a leader, you'll sacrifice the ol' lifestyle that brings you here for way, way better days. You'll see how much you have been missing out on by being stubborn and young-minded. You'll eventually begin to appreciate school and learn how to enjoy obtaining knowledge and being challenged to think. You will see how many groups are out there that are not related to gangs, drugs and violence that you can be a part of.

You'll see how many doors can and will open for you if you change your old ways. If you want to open a door to help your people, well that's possible. How about opening a door to travel across the country to rebuild homes in New Orleans over summer break? What about the door to giving back and feeding the poor at a church? The door will always be open to helping the youngstas with their homework after school. Given you know us, the door to working for The Beat Within and speaking in the community (maybe one day even returning to juvenile) to talk about your life and help the next generation of children see that this incarceration/street/gang life is all bad is so available.

Come on! Take a long look at yourself in the mirror and show the courage to address the demons that lurk inside. Ask for help. Speak to those you love and trust. Or, speak to a professional who may aide you with resources or, if nothing else, an open ear. You have nothing to lose. Stop hating on one another! Stop running! Stop falling into the same traps!

This goes to all of you, even those of you who may think it is too late — it's not! We have many friends who are lifers, meaning they are never going to walk out of prison as free men or women, but each day will do everything in their power to touch lives, be it through the incredible outlet of The Beat Within, their religion, or through other resources and programs. There's nothing that should stop you from being you, except you and only you. Your choice, your move. Next!

This week's great topics, are "Two Hours Of Freedom" —If you were given two hours of freedom... where would you go? What would you do? Would you go spend time with family, hang out with friends, go shopping, go to a sports game, be with your boy/girlfriend? Would you try to run? How far would you go? What would you do if you really had the chance?

Our second topic, "Your Happy Place" — Everybody has a happy place... what does yours look like? Everybody's happy place is different, but what they have in common is this: It is a place where you can escape reality and take a moment to relax. The Beat wants to know what your "Happy Place" looks like. Does it have music playing in the background, or is it quiet? Is there a lot of activity happening, or is it a peaceful place where you can relax and contemplate. How often do you visit this place? You are our eyes and ears, so be detailed and tell us everything you can about your "Happy Place."

The last topic, "What I Miss The Most From My Early Childhood" — Many of you have had rough childhoods. But even those with the worst childhood memories have at least one or two good ones. What good things do you remember from your early childhood, and what do you miss the most? Maybe it was a gift from someone you love. It could be a feeling of freedom, joy or innocence. It could be the family gathering around a game that you used to play together, or a favorite toy, or article of clothing. Whatever comes to mind from reading this topic, just write it down.

OK, there is still time to submit a piece to our 16th editorial note writing contest! Here's the details ... The contest question to consider writing on is, "A Letter To The President." For this contest we want you serious writers to write a letter to President Bush! It is our goal to not only post these letters in The Beat Within publication and our website, but to send them off to the White House, too! Now, do we need to suggest topics on what to talk about? Doubt it. So with this said, our contest question is all about you writing a letter to President Bush. (Don't write anything that will get you in trouble with the Office of Homeland Security...)

The contest submission deadline will be postponed to a later date, but we originally suggested Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 2006. As is the case with all of our writing contests, all pieces submitted will be featured in the BWO (Beat Without) section of the "big" Beat over several issues. And once all have been featured, The Beat editors will read and vote on their four favorites. From these reads, our top-vote-getter will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order. Our second place winner will get a fifty-dollar money order. And our third and fourth-place winners will receive twenty-five-dollar money orders. Good luck writers!

Oh my goodness, we have a host of POW (Piece Of the Week) winners to announce, so lets get busy! Big props to Walter, Dora Da Explorer, Big Vic (writes two), Issues In My Life, Lil' Joe, Lisamar, Mey, Angelina, Lil' Naud, and Sebastian from the 150 Crew. We also have Uriel from Santa Cruz, Lil' Skizz from Walden House PSK, Tremayne and Denise (writes two) from Arizona, Shwaka DaTaka (writes two), Vago and Lgb from SF/YGC.

On a final note, lets dedicate this issue to you writers and readers of The Beat Within who see the good in this work, and have benefited from this resource/work. We appreciate your commitment and desire to share The Beat Within with as many writers and readers as possible. OK, lets get on the right track to healthy and safe living. Best of luck to every single one of you.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

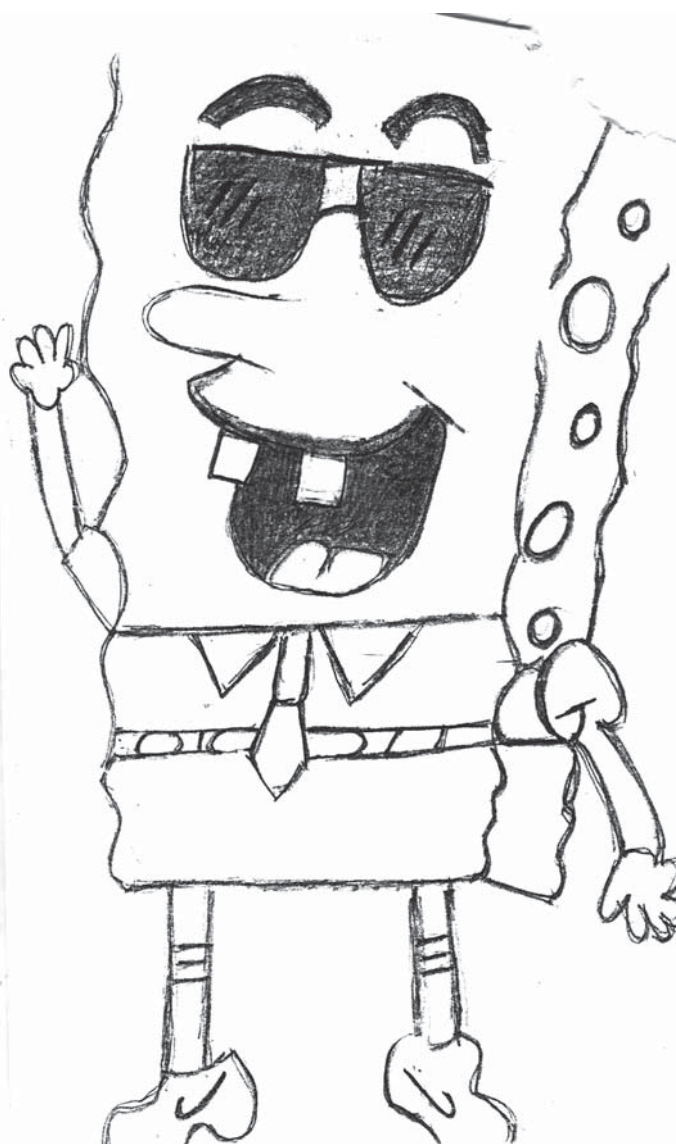
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PIECES OF THE WEEK

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

Figuring out how far I fell is totally irrelevant to my situation because I know if somehow I were to stop and gain my footing, that a lifetime of climbing wouldn't even bring me back to where I started in the first place.

Two strikes I do not need
Constant frustration but never gonna crack
Already institutionalized, so I thought that was that
Handcuffed and headed back to my cell
Constantly thinking, "What did I do? What the hell?"
Greed had overcome me
And all I wanted was money
So let this be a lesson learned
No more quick and easy money —
it has to be earned

-Vago B4, SF/YGC

-Walter, 150 Crew

Losing My Mind

Really, the only thing I can do is hope that if I keep falling, the pain will eventually numb or fade and the vast darkness of my oblivion will one day evaporate, and I will be pulled into a world of fairytales and blue skies. Maybe that won't be my reality, but maybe the insanity inside my head that's locked in a case will burst open from all the sudden impacts. Then my sanity will be overpowered by the misleading thoughts that have been concealed inside my head. My insanity would grow so powerful that I wouldn't be falling anymore, I would be able to finally rest and take a nap on top of the fluffy clouds that linger at the top of my stairs.

But it will not be, will it? Or is my tumbling whatever I make it? Can I turn my reality into my dream? Or will I be consumed by my insanity? I always ask myself, since my reality isn't that great in the first place, would or even could it get worse if I let my insanity take over my mind? At least mentally my existence wouldn't have to be as painful and horrible as my physical existence. But what if I do decide to let the insanity over power my sanity and one day I really do stop tumbling but my insanity doesn't release me so I wouldn't be capable of climbing.

My biggest fear is what if my insanity takes over my motor skills and tosses me over the railing? Then I would find myself falling faster than I've ever fell before. Falling so fast my consciousness slips away and my vision becomes blurred. And the once deafening darkness that consumed my whole world starts changing into multi-colored twilight. I could see faces I never seen before, smiles I've never had the pleasures of feeling, but that's just a fear. All I can do is hope these metal steps get softer and hope one day I will eventually stop.

-Shwaka Da Taka B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You are, without doubt, one of the most original thinkers and writers we've ever had the pleasure of publishing. You take us on trips of thought that blow our minds. Here, you play with the idea of going truly crazy — and by “play with,” we mean you turn it on all its sides and look at it from every angle. That ability to see things from all sides — and then express what you see in such profound ways — is what makes us know that sanity is your only course. The real problem with insanity is that it can't be predicted or ordered in some way that you'd like it to be. Insanity is another word for losing control, and control is critical to your future. So, we're not worried about you losing your mind. We're not even worried about you getting back to where you started [we're more interested in where you're going]. All we're worried about is the bumps you're getting on your head, and hoping you have some relief soon and forever!

To My Old PO

Can you give me a chance to heal?
 A chance to love and really feel?
 Can I trust the words you speak?
 Or is your word poor and weak?
 But does it matter what I think?

When you talk, my existence does shrink.
 How come you say you want me to change,
 But put me in a world that's new and strange?
 How come when my life starts to get brighter,
 You grab me and tighten my chains a little bit tighter?
 How come you say you want to see me at home,
 But then turn around and lock me up cold and alone?
 Why do you expect me to be better than I am?
 Why do you want me to crawl instead of stand?
 You tell me I can better my life,
 But how can I do that if I'm kept inside?
 You tell me you'll be there when I need to talk,
 But to really find you, I have to hurt like a hawk.
 Why do your promises always seem so shallow,
 And only come around to tell me something hard to swallow?

When you give me advice, why is it hard to understand?
 And only seem to smile when I'm in court on the stand.

I tell my dreams of how I'm going to use my freedom,
 And then you reply, "Ha, ha. You must be dreaming."
 I bet you want to see me rot in a cage
 And be consumed by my internal rage.
 How come I still can't trust your ways?
 And all your lies put me in a craze.

When you speak, all I hear is blah, blah, blah,
 I see your face laughing at me outside the walls.
 I bet you plan for hours on how to make my life worse.
 You want to fill my heart with pain just to watch it burst.

Do you really want to see me succeed?
 You say you want me to, but it's hard to believe.
 Why do you build up my hope with all these lies?
 Why do you turn your back on all my cries?
 So in the end, the truth we'll find,
 After I free myself of your web's design.
 It's got me tangled, one day I'll be free.
 I will succeed and my triumphs you'll see.

-Shwaka Da Taka B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Does your old PO even know what you are capable of, Mark? Has he (she?) ever seen any of your writing? One thing we think we know about you... whatever your PO thinks about you, it's you that will be responsible for your own successes. We know there are obstacles in your life that your PO could reduce or eliminate for you, but in the end, those are obstacles that you will overcome. You have the support and love of family and a remarkable soul and intelligence that is like a wind at your back pushing you forward. Keep sailing!

Why do you expect me
 to be better than I am?
 Why do you want me to crawl

instead of stand?
 You tell me I can better my life,
 But how can I do that if I'm kept inside?

Childhood Memories

Never had a childhood life
 Not how I was raised;
 Raised to be grown,
 Everyday I made a praise;
 Living my life like everything
 Is just right;
 I was so young to
 Remember, but I was making
 It through the night.
 I always cried just
 To get the thought of not
 Having a childhood memory
 Being raised in a foster home
 My life is a real misery.
 Finally met my mom at
 The age of thirteen, the
 Only thing I remember from
 My childhood is being messed
 Up in a sense. You could
 Ask me questions if you don't
 Know what I mean. My daughter is soon to be one-years
 Old. She's growing up fast and I have stories untold.
 It's never to late that's why I'm making a new start,
 I'm loving my daughter from the top of my heart.
 I can't have memories if I'm messed up in this system
 so I gots to get out before it gets too late,
 I want my daughter to have childhood memories the ones
 so great.
 I had no time to live as a child
 that's why I'm gonna give that chance to my daughter
 so she can tell her kids how she lived her life.

-Dora Da Explorer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is such a beautiful, heartfelt piece. We commend you for wanting to take charge and give your daughter a childhood different from yours. Without real intention like yours, cycles only repeat themselves and continue to depress people's lives. We wish you the best of luck and think you'll be a great mom when you follow through with your intentions.

A Place In The Past

a happy place with no enemies in sight
 no darkness around, surrounded by light
 be like superman, but without a kryptonite
 just living my life, but doin' it right
 a place where i once used to be
 as a child i grew up with this reality
 no worries, i was stress-free
 now the opposite is all i see
 a thought, a distant memory
 i don't even know myself, there is no me
 i want to excel
 but first i have to dwell
 it might be bad, but eventually it'll turn swell
 that place ain't in this cell
 a place i want to be when i move on
 where my anger isn't a factor and i stay calm
 having complete control of my emotions
 pure tranquility no more commotion
 a place in my past that i wish to recreate
 where i will stay until it's too late

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Bill Wilson, the author of the twelve steps and AA's big book, calls what you're talking about "restored to sanity" — which can be achieved. Even those of us who never had it in our past, can claim it as a God-given birthright that nothing in this world can take away. It takes work though. "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." And don't ever stop writing your poetry, even if you quit The Beat, 'cause it's not just an emotional distillation but a powerful tool for transformation — which is why we so appreciate your sharing your verbal heat with the readers of The Beat: you teach!

Feeling Not Cared About

On the outs, my family acts like they're concern about me. But when I come to jail, they all just forget about! I've been here for fifty days, and not once have they thought of writing me or of visiting me on Saturdays and Sundays! It's scandalous that even my own mama don't want to come visit me.

Then once I come home, they wanna tell me about the things I should do with my life. After being ignored for numerous days on end, they expect me to listen to what they gotta say to me. Man, I wish they would've figured that if they couldn't take a Sunday off from whatever they was doing, to come check on me, then I ain't listening to anybody!

Since I did the time on my own, I'm gonna do whatever I do on my own when I get out! 'Cause it hurts to wake up Saturdays and Sundays knowing you're not getting a visit, but your roommate is! It hurts to see other inmates receive letters from their family and friends every night and you don't ever get even one. Man, this feeling isn't nice at all!

I understand that this is a punishment for my bad behavior and all, but that don't mean your family gotta leave you alone when you need their love and support! 'Cause knowing that I am not being cared about, makes me feel hopeless and unwanted.

-Issues In My Life. 150 Crew

From The Beat: It really is one of the hardest things in the world, to be locked up and watch your roommate read letters and get visits from family while you get not one letter or one visit. But then what are you going to do with that pain? Use it as an excuse to mess up more and here and mess up more out there as soon as you get the chance? Make it one more excuse to do those short-term feel-good things that have you feeling bad for such a very long time. If you really do understand that this your punishment, then humble yourself, and turn your pain to gain by seeing just how much what you did hurt not only you but your family, too. Don't blame them for not supporting you when you're the one who was doing all that stuff when they were there for you at home anytime you wanted to come home and hear some good, loving advice. Now you're thinking you have a right to punish them? The truth is that if you go back to that headstrong self-destructive behavior, you'll just be insuring that this very situation that hurts you so much and that you hate so much, will become permanent - like the name of that movie, Permanent Midnight - and you don't need that. What you need to do is to win back the trust and respect that you destroyed. The love is still there, but you've lost their trust. That's on you, and your future relationship with your family is too! So cry when it hurts, but don't get it so twisted that when you get out and do worse!

Rest In Peace

It was sometime awhile back my brother and his girlfriend were taking me to get a U-A. Something really strange happened. As we were leaving the complex, a guy came out of nowhere with a gun. I heard my brother's girlfriend scream and my brother asked her what was the problem and she would not say anything.

Then I looked back and there he was, running up behind us in the daylight with a pistol. The first thing that came to my mind was to keep my head low. My brother's girlfriend sped up and tried to run the red light when another car came and crashed into us from the side. As the car hit us' it made us spin and as we were spinning he shot at my brother's girlfriend. The bullet went through her neck and through her brain.

To this day I don't know if he was after me or my brother or his girlfriend or the reason why. Rest In Peace Dominique P!

-Tremayne, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Wow, that must have been very traumatic to witness and wonder why this happened. It sounds as if you have seen enough violence. We hope you will put yourself in safe situations and surround yourself with positive influences from this point forward so you can have a positive and hopefully safer life. We are very sorry for your loss and to have to carry this tragedy with question.

RIP Jamilah

Jamilah was my lil' sister. She got killed in 2003 when she was beat to death by my uncle. He went to jail for fifteen years to life; so he not getting out.

I wish he would get out — but I don't want to think like that.

My lil' sister was two years old when it happened. My lil' brother is still going through it. I try to help him out, but I'm still going through it myself. She would have turned five on the eleventh of July, 2006.

I know my lil' sister didn't know no better. She was still a baby. That's what drugs do to people — he was on heroin. He said she would not go to sleep, so he beat her.

To all y'all ninjas out wit' a lil' sister — keep them safe! You can't do it in here! So do right.

-Lil' Joe, 150 crew

From The Beat: This has got to be one of the most painful stories we've ever had to print, and we've printed a lot of painful stories over the years. But someone beating a baby to death for not going to sleep? Oh Lord! Yes, it does show how dehumanized an addict can become. And we all know heroin withdrawal can make you "dope sick" to the point of insanity. Still there are some things for which there is no excuse, not the devil made me do it, or the heroin, or alcohol — let alone his attempt to claim the your baby sister made him do it! Your pain must be overwhelming, but don't let it switch into vengeance, or your little brother will lose two siblings, 'cause he'll lose you, too. Violence cannot be stopped with more violence, for, as Marvin Gaye sang, "only love can conquer hate." If you live for your loved ones, if you live to give love, you can pay no greater respect to the memory of the little sister you loved. RIP Jamilah, may choirs of angels attend you in Heaven where innocence is rewarded and suffering is no more.

Juvenile Hall Made Me Change

I'm a 15-year-old female. I never thought I was gonna come here, I always past thru juvenile hall and I use to say I'm never gonna be there, now I'm here and it's so hard. I have cried, and I have felt lonely and stressed out, but I know it's my fault that I'm here and I know that I can pass through this, I have passed through a lot of stuff, why I can't pass through this?

So now I see everything way different, juvenile hall made me change. Now I see that the streets ain't my home, my home is where my family's at.

So now that I'm here thinking it was a good thing coming here it helped me realize that I have to change and not just think about me and my boyfriend.

So hopefully I get out soon, so I could go back to school and never come back. I love my family and I love my baby Nestor. Hopefully people see I did change and I could go back to my love ones.

-Lisamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes it's hard to convince people you've changed, especially if you've said it before. But that doesn't mean it's impossible, just that you have to prove some things with actions rather than with words. Over time, through doing well and staying positive, your loved ones will see that you've changed, because of course they want that for you too.

RIP Thanks To Meth

Sometimes I wonder what happened to just me and you against the world?

But then I look back to all the problems you had with meth. Sometimes I wonder did meth really do that to you or did you do it to yourself?

Sometimes I wonder what happened to the love we had?

All I can say is meth happened to all the love Meth took everything away, even your life

-Denise, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: A powerful writing about a powerful poisonous drug. It sounds like meth sucked the life and love out of your friend. This would be a great writing for anyone to read who was either using meth or considering using meth. It sounds like you have seen first hand the dangers of this poison.

Two Hours And . . . Magic!

Why The Beat would tease us with the idea of being able to run a program with the chance to have two hours of freedom a week where you could go anywhere, do anything, and have anything — and having magic? Haha! That's crazy! But all right, all right, if I had that chance, I actually wouldn't go and smoke like some people would jump on this as an opportunity to do so.

I'd go kick it with my sister, Dan, and my friends, Laura and her boyfriend (also my friend), Kevin, Joe, Nick and Pygmy! And maybe Sondra, Brett and Nikki! Why? Because I love them, they support me and I miss 'em all so, so, so, so freakin' much that it drives me crazy, especially Dan — me and her are real close. And hey, with my magic, I'd make time stop (is that cheating?) to make sure I didn't feel rushed and, therefore, I'd be able to have a good time! We'd go out to eat (anything but county food).

And I'd time a three-hour shower and get a massage (sleepin' on concrete really screws up your back). I'd check my e-mail, and my MySpace, and spend time with my dogs! My mom promised me a shopping spree. So I'd jump on that (well get a start at least)! And after I've felt clean, full, reimbursed (w/ friends and fam'), I'd say my good-byes and promise to be back next week.

I'd start the clock, then speed up time and, before anyone knew it, it will have been a week already — and almost before I knew it, I was being released! Man, if only time could fly like that! That's why I said that possibility was a tease, because we all know a week in the Hall seems like six months, and a month seems like a year! I guess it's fun to think about — but I just try to keep it real.

-Ney, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, with you imagination and writing skills, maybe you should keep it real in real life but indulge yourself the fictional genre known as "magical realism" on the written page — 'cause just imagining all that offers some very real relief from the tedious and oppressive daily routine of detainee life in juvenile hall. Unless it truly unsettles you to allow your mind to play around like this, you have the power to not only offer some rec' time to other detainees even if they're stuck in their cells (rooms) on time out, but also via your magical musings to help others clarify what's really valuable in life — not rushing to smoke your brains away but spending fun time with loved ones, and even the simple pleasure of a luxuriously long, hot shower (followed by a massage, no less)! Maybe should write a short story where you imagine yourself visiting a spa with all your friends, the kind where they serve healthy yet tasty food as well. Or not. We just want to say, you are a fine and articulate writer, and we'd love to read more. And if you're being released soon, why not write from home for The Beat Without (you know, our "veterano" back pages).

What Life Is About

life is not about keeping score
it's not about how many people will call you .
it's not about who you have dated or haven't dated at all.
its not about who you have kissed
or who you have slept with
or what sport you play.
it's not about who likes you
it's not about your shoes or your hair color.
it's not about your skin color
or where you live
or what school you go to.
it's not about money, clothes or people you hang out with.
it's not about being alone.
it's about overcoming obstacles of life.

-Denise, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Great writing. Many times people dwell about the material things in life and don't appreciate the people that are close to them and what success really means. It sounds like you have overcome some obstacles, and still, as most of us, have some to overcome. Best wishes!

How Kitty Saved My Life

Well, she saved my life because I was pregnant by my boyfriend, but I didn't know it at the time when I was on drugs and went crazy behind my drug use. They took me to the hospital — and that's when I found out I was pregnant.

I told him, but he didn't believe me. So I was like three months, and I stayed in the hospital for a while. Then, the next thing you know, I was five months pregnant. So I asked people, "Should I have this baby?" And they all said that it was up to me. And I said, "I don't know what to do."

So my step-mom, Kitty, said that if I want it, just have it, and that if I don't want it, she could help me get an abortion. So, I said, "Okay," and got an abortion. Because I thought he didn't want it, I killed the baby. But I didn't want to have it anyways, 'cause I was only fifteen years old.

So I'm now still happy with my life, but now that I'm seventeen years old, I do regret my decision. It's not the same.

-Angelina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a profoundly serious piece, and it sounds like you did all the right things prior to your decision (not counting the drug abuse). You talked to the father, who clearly was not ready to accept his responsibility as a father. And you talked to many others, seeking advice. Finally your step-mother offered her help, (presumably) either way you chose to go. And in your title you thank her for saving your life! Therefore, it's a little confusing in the end exactly what you regret: the pregnancy? Certainly the drug abuse! The abortion? When you write, "I killed the baby," that's a very judgmental way to phrase it, suggesting you regret it. To be sure, it's a grief from which you will never fully recover ("It's not the same."), but you are also saying that you were, in fact, too young at fifteen, right? Honor your sadness over it, but don't beat yourself up anymore.

For The Haters

i get good news and people wanna hate
i'm always on time and people try to make me late
always telling me i'll be joinin' them upstate
but that ain't my fate
i ain't just another stat' in the book
i'm the master of the game, moving the queens to the rook
this don't scare me, i ain't close to bein' shook
i see my future clear, it ain't hard to look
but the key is acting on a situation
staying positive in a negative nation
where foes is friends, friends is foes
and who is solid no one knows
real recognize real, no fake-ass shhhh
if you two-faced, then you might as well quit
'cause i ain't wit' all that drama
i'm into writing with periods and a comma
i can be hood but i can be civilized
i'm be real, no more telling lies
quick to criticize
haters gon' ride it out 'till my demise

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And your demise will be no time soon, 'cause you grow stronger even locked in that little room. As a matter of fact when your strength is your mind, even if you understand and can command the physical kind, you find your character distracted by the street's victories as much as its defeats. And while only a very few would ever choose a monkish cell, you've chosen to transform this time you serve in hell into a school for a warrior's spirit. When others seek to numb their hearts and steel their minds against the awful flow of incarcerated time, you do not fear it. You do not fear them. You do not fear yourself nor the truth when you hear it. And so you grow in strength and wisdom even as serve time with haters in a hateful system. Much love and respect. Can't wait to see what you write next.

life is not about keeping score
it's not about how many people will call you .
it's not about who you have dated or haven't dated at all

Two Hours...

Man, if I had two hours of freedom, I would do a lot of stuff. I would go to an all-you-can-eat restaurant and eat hella food. I would spend most of my time with my family. I would also spend a little time with the female that been holding me down, if you know what I mean.

I wouldn't do stupid things. I would take advantage of my freedom. I wouldn't even spend no time on the block because being on the block is what got me in the situation I'm in right now.

I would be glad to breathe the fresh air out there because up in the halls we breathe stale-ass air. I would smoke hella weed by myself all day. I ain't gone even lie. It would be hard for me to report back to juvenile hall because I would be having too much fun. But two hours ain't even that long, for real, for real, because time goes by fast. I wouldn't even be able to do too much. I would be out my body for real. But I would give my PO or whoever gave me the two-hour pass a big thank you. One love, Beat.

-Lgb B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really like how you thought about your two hours, and then decided what is most important immediately (family and food), and what is most important in the long run (not running and putting yourself into an even deeper hole). This shows how much you have matured, and that you're no longer looking at the world through the eyes of a child who only wants instant gratification. If you are willing not only to come back to the hall after your pass, but also to thank whoever gave you that gift of freedom, then you are on the verge of becoming a responsible young man who knows what's best for him and his family, and who can do what he sets his mind to. (Don't mess that fine mind up with too much weed, though, because thinking clearly is also an important part of being a grown up.)

Dear Crystal

You used to be my homegirl
I thought you were my best friend
Crystal, you gave me a great high
But I hated you in the end
Look what you've done to my momma
Look what you've done to me
Crystal, look at what you've done to me
Crystal look at what you've done to my homeboys
Now I'm hella craving you, and I'm goin' crazy
Every day is goin' by and it's buggin' me hella bad
When I was cold and all alone, you were the only one I
had
Without you I was hella mad.
Beatin' people up, stealin' they money
Just to get some more
Me and my homeboys would rob a store
I would do anything for you... I had to deal with people
callin' me a whore!
Because of you, I had a bad rep
Man, I don't want to end up doin' too much —
And smokin' you (crystal) to death!

-Lil' Skizz, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is a fine poem, Lil' Skizz — except, in the end, it's what you've done to yourself that matters. Crystal is a bad friend to have. (Even though you say it was your only friend when you were "cold and all alone," the real question to ask yourself is why were you cold and all alone?) Anyway, it's obvious that you know where this friendship leads, so it's up to you to stop. Crystal has no mind of its own.

I wouldn't even spend no time on the block because being on the block is what got me in the situation I'm in right now.

Against All Odds, Me

made in a deteriorating environment
persevering — helps me fly
with all odds stacked against me
my only way to escape was getting high
further diluting the power of my mind
a real solution always seemed too far off
kept on struggling and only getting by
made me feel of less and less worth
with my conscience fighting my scheming mind
and my damaged and dying heart going blue
yet i still rise like the lifting of cranes
my dark skin and well built figure
is sculpted not to intimidate
but was made to break down barriers
heretofore intended to get in my way
so my past lingers like a panther in the amazon
while my future yet untold
is guaranteed to be outstandingly amazing
if many times i've been criticized
for the grandeur of my dreams
i know with the certainty of proof
against all odds in truth
the only thing that has been stopping me is — me

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We saw it all in you from the start, saw it in the size of your heart, your mental capability, and your desire to stand apart. Yet we also saw you waver toward the so-called easy road that flattered your ambitious charm, promising quick profits if you would but close your eyes to the harm. No strong-arm robberies for you, and yet you were seduced by criminal intent. It was your impatience and lack of humility that urged you through cupidity to seize by unsavory means in unseemly haste what you might have earned through diligence at a slower pace. The grandeur of a dream fulfilled is yours still to have and hold, for you grow wiser as you grow old and will not merely serve your time but make your time serve you. Against all odds, it's up to you.

I'm Happy The Way My Life Turned Out.

Yeah buddy not a regret in the world.

If someone told me I was to walk down a different path and at the end i would own the world, I'd just simply tell them to go give the offer to one of the knocks on the avenue. I've learned a lot of valuable lessons throughout my life, and I know how to survive on the streets.

Now if I was in the family with Dick and Jane and the picket white fence, and then all of a sudden I was left on the streets to fend for my self I would be lost.

The only things I wish I could do over in this life is the deaths of my bra Marcellus and my cousin Raymond and my big bra Webb, may God rest their souls.

If God had another road for me to walk down then he would have put me on it, but instead he put me on the road with pain, grief, sufferin', hate and shady business, and I thank Him 'cause it only made me the strong intelligent young man I am, just sittin' here in this cold ass room, thinkin' to myself about what I got to do to get out and stay out.

And the only way I can do that is to think smart and get money, cause it's a grimy world there, and we all got to live in it.

-Lil Naud, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a moving piece. Sure, you're right, you have learned valuable lessons from this life, and you have skills and mental strength to be proud of, but maybe now, that road God put you on has a fork in it, a crossroads. The world is part grimy, part beauty, and it's ON YOU to decide which part you want to contribute to. You want to think smart and get money? Well do it, but do it legit. Like you said, you have become a strong intelligent young man, but what are you going to do with that strength. It doesn't have to be a white picket fence, but it sure could be a safe home full of love and hope. Do you have it in you to build that kind of a home?

My Anger

Enraged at the thought of being trapped
away from family
Seeking for that happiness
I once possessed within me
The smile that I carry
only cloaks the anger inside
As I bury all rage,
so no one can find
My true, angry self
I've hidden for so long
One day it might erupt,
explode,
go all wrong
But I keep it tucked within,
so everybody sees
That I'm a nice guy,
unharmful,
not a beast
So I try to patch it up
seal it away
for good
But with so much anger and frustration,
I don't know if I could

-Franklin LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Terrific poem! You create a solid piece of work that gives us a taste of the anger you hold inside. How do you channel the anger so it does not get you into further trouble? What's your secret? You need to work on yourself so the anger doesn't get you in the end. Sounds to us like you are on the right road, you recognize the problem and now is the time to address the rage that you keep inside.



Keep it Respectful

Respect your parents because they raised you and love you with all their heart. And you cuss them out, say they ain't shhh and other things, but what you don't understand is that if it wasn't for them you wouldn't be here. They could have had an abortion or even gave you up for adoption but they loved you enough to raise you. And you just disrespected them.

Yet, there are kids that don't have parents and they probably lived in an orphanage all their lives. So you are lucky, you may not think so now, but you will realize.

So next time you see your parents, thank them for not giving up on you and tell them you love them.

-Jamal, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Looks like you have been doing some thinking about your family and what they mean to you. Sometimes you need time away to realize that you should not to take people in your life for granted. Seems being away from your family helped you realize how much you need them and how much they have given you.

What I Miss the Most From My Early Childhood

Is my dad real? Because why he left my mom? I was always confused, not knowing why he left. Then, after a while when you grow up in this society, and it seems like everybody got a dad but me! No, it's a different story for me!

But now I'm all grow up, and I still keep thinking all of these seventeen years of my life: Why he never call or mail me? Maybe he don't know he got a son! Because now I know, since my mom told me in 2000, that I have a dad in Manila. Also I have a half-brother there. But it doesn't matter no more to me, 'cause now I hate my dad for not being there for me!

My dad missed my fancy birthday parties, my graduation party, all of that stuff when you want your dad to be there. But now that I have support from my mom, she's like my mother and my father to me! And I am dedicated to my mom, because she's the one who taught me what's of true value in life. If I do have a change in my life though, I would want to see my dad. It feels like I have a missing link inside of me.

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you were a little kid, you may have wondered if your dad was real just the same way kids wonder if Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny is real. But then when you got older, it only hurt to know your real dad lived in the Philippines and never saw or wrote you on your birthdays, or any other time. No wonder you began to hate him. And while going to see him with hate in your heart doesn't make much sense, we do understand your wanting simply to meet him, see him, talk to him. Only time will tell. However, you are blessed to have such a loving and supportive mother in your life.

My Love

my love is forever
i give love to people who deserve it
love when sun shine, love when stormy weather
even to people who's hurting
my love is special
you can't just ask for it
when i next to you
my love continues forward
my love is sweet
it's nice and warm
it'll knock you off your feet
put your heart together when it's torn
my love is amazing
miraculous and generous
my love can get crazy
make you happy when you throw a fit
so this is my love
to whoever i think needs it
even though i'm a thug
my heart still bleeding

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Isn't it a trip, that thug love can be as tender as this and as powerful as bliss when the beloved is about to throw a fit. It's no surprise that a thug's heart bleeds, but it takes it to another level when a thug truly feels his beloved's needs. We trust empathy and not exploitation is the motive you heed.

next time you see your parents,
thank them for not giving up on
you and tell them you love them

What I'd Like To Forget

I wanna forget everything.
I wanna forget I'm in juvy,
that I've had a hard life,
that I have to live in a place I don't want to,
that people are always lying to me,
trying to make me feel better.
But they don't know
that they're just hurting me more.
I wanna forget everything
and everybody around me, forever!

-Nancy, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That's a lot of forgetting. Let's look at it from another direction. What would you like to remember? Maybe you'd feel just a bit better if you concentrated on the good things that have happened. Give it a try.

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom right now from this place called Juvenile Hall, I would go home. Nobody matters more to me than my family. So when I got there I would be sittin' at the table talkin', playin' dominoes. Everybody would be there — my brothers John and Mike, my sister Jamira, my twin Teanna, my mom Mary, and my boyfriend Kawazi. That would be the only thing I would want for that two hours.

At the time that I would have to go home I wouldn't even think of runnin'. I know that if I ran I would be riskin' losin' everything I have, and it's not worth it. I wouldn't want to be scared everywhere I am on the run, never stayin' in a steady place. But if I had a real chance of most definitely getting away I would go to Alabama with my granny to finish school.

-Roast Beef GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That is very mature thinking Roast Beef. Many young people would run and risk losing that chance of long-term freedom to have momentary freedom, a bad bargain. Your time will come that you will be sitting at the table with your family playing dominos and looking back on this as a bad experience that's behind you.

I Value . . .

I value my sister's friendship. She knows more about me than any of my friends do. She been through stuff with me that I wouldn't even be able to begin to even try and explain to anyone else.

She stands by me through thick and thin. She helps me when I don't know, and vice versa. I love her with all my heart, and it kills me to let her down. I know if the world were to turn it's back on me, she'd still be there. She's never cheated me or did me wrong — to each other we are more dependable than our mom is! At times she looks out for me like I've always looked out for her. She's my shoulder to cry on and I'm hers.

My sister is the best gift I think I've ever gotten from my parents besides my own life (even though at first, at three years old, I was jealous). No one or nothing, will ever be able to change the way I feel about her or her importance to me — no one! And I just hope she knows that!

-Ney, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Judging from the information as well as the emotional intensity of the foregoing piece, we know that she feels your love, loyalty and commitment. Relationships such as you describe are always reciprocal, a two-way street, as you make abundantly clear. That you are each a gift in the life of the other is equally clear. But now, what you choose to do, how you think and act, outside your relationship with your sister will also and always have an impact, if not on the love or commitment, certainly on the quality of time you spend in each other's company. For example, when you do something that gets you caught up, well ... you see what we mean. And it also applies when you think you're "getting away" with whatever, or getting over, etc. We hope you are good role models for each other as much as you are devoted to each other.

In My World

In my world, in my mind, I am God, and I can find purpose and place.

Dead in the face of fear, insanity is not change,
but finding a non-conformist path of thought.

To fear what society thinks of you is a sign of weakness.

You should be yourself and you will find freedom
from the penitentiary that is your mind.

Be free, my child, be free.

-Michael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: What does it mean to "be yourself"? Are you most yourself when you are being kind to others, and yourself? Or are you most yourself when you don't consider the welfare and feelings of those around you? What does it mean to be free, and how does one stay free?

... I wouldn't even think of runnin'. I
know that if I ran I would be riskin' losin'
everything I have, and it's not worth it.

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom, I would stay in my cell. Freedom ain't the outs. The outs is good, but it's not freedom. America ain't freedom. If I get to go for two hours, I still "have to obey laws" and do shhh like that. We ain't free! So by saying two hours of freedom, you're making it seem as if the American streets are full of freedom.

To hell with America! We don't got no freedom! We gotta walk on the street when the road is clear; we gotta wear clothes as we walk the streets; we can smoke cigarettes and drink beer, but we can't smoke weed even giving the fact that cigarettes and alcohol are worse than marijuana. We can't paint our house all black (for some and for me) because the house isn't really ours, it's an apartment building. We are forced to be a part of this society because if we wanted to live free, truly free, we would be able to roam across some free land and pick a nice spot where we would want to live, or build a house/shelter. We would be able to wander off some more and pick a nice spot where we want to grow our food and hunt animals. We would be able to gamble as often as we wanted and choose to not pay taxes to a government that doesn't give a shhh about me and does not help or benefit me in any god damn way!

We ain't free! Freedom is an illusion! True freedom means no law! Do you see how cleverly society has fooled us! Even society has been fooled! Freedom isn't outside these oppressive walls! Freedom doesn't exist! Freedom is all part of the "American Dream." We're being expected to accept and want these "American" concepts, which are not our own wants.

-Meen B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're interested to know what your definition of freedom is. If real freedom means not having to obey rules, regulations or laws, what would a society of "real freedom" be like? When we look around this room, we see clearly that a world with no rules (total freedom) would put a lot of people's safety in jeopardy, so what about the freedom of people not to be victims? How can we strike a balance between freedom and limitations on our freedom? Should free speech include the right to yell fire in a crowded theater? If you say yes, what would the consequences be? If you say no, then aren't you agreeing that some limits on our freedom are necessary? You say we have no freedom here, but we know too many other countries where there is nowhere near the freedom we have here. There are countries where you can go to prison for saying anything negative about the country or its leaders, but here you can write, "To hell with America" and be secure in the knowledge that you have the freedom to say that. Doesn't that count for something?

Mama's Boy

My mom was not there for me as a cub.
 She said forget it and left me for drugs.
 Worst of all I was in a tub
 But the tub was all filled up.
 She left me there to mess up
 So after that I grew up and smoked bud.
 As for her, mom never showed love.
 I can't even hug.
 But the only thing I could do is mug.
 She really know she's towed up
 Of life and leaving me like a pair of dice.
 When I grow old I'll stay up all night
 Then study and find my might
 That sleeps in the forgiving living.

-Henry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a beautiful piece that got us right in the heart. It's not always easy to talk about things this painful so we hope that putting these experiences into words made you feel better, even if only a tiny bit. We can't imagine what it's like to grow up without the one person who everyone says should be on your side. But use the hurt feelings and disappointment to make you a better, stronger man. Don't let it be a reason to not try.

Two Hours Of Freedom

Now, if I got two hours out, I wouldn't really think much. I mean, sure, I could try to run or hide, but in the end, it will just mess me up. See, the way I look at it is if I just do the time, the faster it will be up, though if I had maybe a few months of lock up, that two hours looks really good.

I mean, two hours is not that long. What can I do in two hours? Talk to my friends? Or see my moms an' family that hasn't seen me for a while? Take a long walk of contemplation, just thinking on what I don't really think about — freedom? Because one day I will be out and making right choices, keepin' straight an' not caught up in the shhh again.

-Jason B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like you're growing up, Jason, which includes not jumping at every easy instant gratification that comes along. Hanging in there, doing your program, and thinking about the freedom that will be coming again shows maturity. What are some of those "right choices" you plan to make so that you don't get caught up in this again?

Living In A World Full Of Pain

When you in YGC Juvenile, you on lockdown! You come to YGC for a reason! Now you tryna get out! People coming to talk to you for so many reasons, you thinking you gettin' out, but little do you know! So you say you learned yo' lesson, but did you really?

People talking bout' you and you worried about what other people thinking 'bout you! It ain't worth it. You so worried, crying, tryna figure out when you got court. And all you saying, "I'ma change. I really did learn my lesson," 'cause yo' PO tryna keep you in here, and yo' attorney tryna get you out. You sweet talk everybody around you, but don't forget you said you was gonna change so many times.

Own up to what you did! Get out and stay out, 'cause when push comes to shove, you ain't got no one but yo' mama by yo' side! Own up to what you did... no regrets and no excuses.

(to be continued)

-Rosie GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're curious how you're planning to continue this piece, Rosie, since it seems to say everything that needs to be said already. How are you taking the responsibilities for your own actions, Rosie? And how will owning up to what you did help you when you walk out of here in a way that will keep you from ever coming back?

Makin' Better Decisions

Last week I asked myself if I love my fam, girl, and my freedom so much, why can't I stay out of jail. The answer to that is because I was not making the right decisions. I wanted to have all the good things, but I was tryin' to get them the wrong way. As smart as I am, I wasn't usin' my brain. Now that I'm a little older and much more smarter, its time for me to start makin' better decisions.

-Big Bills B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's clear to us that you have already started using your brain in a way that can only benefit you now and in the future. Who can say why some people mature into responsible young adults and others don't seem able to move out of childhood? Whatever the reasons, we're glad to see you thinking in a new way. Can you give us a couple of examples of those better decisions you plan to make?

See, the way I look at it is if I just
 do the time, the faster it will be up,
 though if I had maybe a few months
 of lock up, that two hours looks
 really good.

Week Seven

It's been seven weeks
 I'm still stuck in these halls,
 still going through it all,
 wearing someone else's drawes,
 still waiting for the call for my permanent release
 from YGC and back to my streets.

This place is hella weak.

I ain't feeling this shhh.

I lost two months of my life for hitting a dumb lick.

But at the time I was blind,
 smoke clouding my mind,
 weeds of all kind, straight bomb like mines,
 and it blew away my better judgment.

I never should've touched it.

If I just went home I never would of done it.

But I did so I'm stuck in it with no freedom...

I gotta ask to go to the can and I'm stuck
 at this spot, this 8 by 10 box,
 just trying to keep my head up like Tupac dreaming of better
 days. But then I hear that knock
 on my door... Damn! It's 7 o'clock!
 Up and brush yo teeth, ya start like this,
 den fold up ya shhh, then on the light switch. Every day is
 the same
 and I'm going insane
 but it's plain
 that I'm that one to blame.

-Mista Majic B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You say it's because of a "dumb lick" that you've lost your time. But we hope that doesn't mean you think there is such a thing as a "smart lick." And do you really want us to believe that you were so stoned you didn't know what you were doing? We believe you were stoned, we just don't believe you didn't know what you were doing. But regardless, you recognize your own responsibility for what's going on in your life right now, and that means you know what you need to do in order to reverse your fortunes... Words won't do it. Only deeds will.

Happy Birthday Mom!

today is your day, treat yourself nice
go outside and thank god for this lovely, blessed day
to see another year, thank god
that your hair's not that grey
thank him for your money-making hands
and for the kids that you can sometimes hardly stand
thank him for the last of the hair that you have
thank him for this glorious day and treat yourself out
go to starbucks and grab you a cup
get your feet done up on fruitvale
take forty cat naps (which i know you'll love)
treat yourself like you got wealth
because today is your day
so spend it anyway that you please
and try not to think of the negative things
(like me)

-Jennifer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh what a wonderful poem, full of love and happiness until that awfully sad twist at the end. Yet while both your incarceration and the pattern of thought and actions on your part that led to it, is certainly negative, whether or not you yourself remain a "negative thing" in your mother's life is entirely up to you. You have the power to become a wholly positive force in her life. Ah, now, wouldn't that be a wonderful birthday present from you!

The Kid In Me

What I miss most about my childhood is being able to be a kid.
Almost every day going to the park
playing softball with my father.
Playing with the kids in the neighborhood.
We would play hide and go seek and doorbell ditch.
We would also play another game that we made up, which we
called kick the can.
It was kinda like football.
Every night when the sun would start to go down
my mom would whistle or yell for me to come in and I would run
home
all dirty from playing outside. It was so cute.
I miss being a kid so much it's not even funny.
I had no worries nothing to complain about, I had it made.
I miss my childhood.

-Nicole, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you had a great childhood and that your pretty far from home right now. Childhood provides a wealth of good memories for a lot of us, and if we can gather strength from them, they can continue on in our lives. We hope you can take the good memories you have to give you a little perspective—there are better lives to be had than the ones offered by the streets.

two hours of freedom with mom

two hours of freedom would be
me spending time with my mom
i wish she was here because if she was
i'd spend my free time with her for my whole two hours
that would make me feel special and happy
'cause she everything to me
and what happened to her i wish i could've stopped it
because i would've gone in her place if i could
and she would still be here on earth
and i know she would be sad for me
but i would be happy because i saved her life
later on when it was her time
i would still get to see her up above
peace out beat this was yo' boy lil' shawn god bless

-Lil' Shawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know this poem must be posted on the inside of the gates of heaven where your mother waits for you to join her someday. But you need to know she wants you to take your time her on earth to live a long and prosperous life. She's sad to see you where you are now, but she hears your every prayer for another chance to live your life right out in the free world. For her sake and for your own, add your best efforts to your prayers — and since you can't die in your mother's place, live for her!

It's Your Choice To Do Right!

i wanna change
to hold the world in my hands
to walk the streets once again
i wanna change
to build my own path
i wanna dance my own way
of life
i wanna change
to do my own right
even if that is to choose to fight
because this is my life
i wanna go home
so i can fold my clothes
close my door
and not have to say no more
i wanna go home
so i can let my bird out of it's cage
and clean the bottom with some faboloso spray
i wanna go home
so i can wake up to a real room
and then go to a real school
so i can solve some real problems
i wanna be able to
walk downtown oakland at lunch
with my little brah-brah
smokin' a blunt
go to class with my nerves relaxed
and fly high while the teachers walk by
"great work, jennifer"
"you're doing great in my class"
but to be honest with you
it's the streets that
i or my brother will not pass
the game is so tight
everyone's playing
even without someone knowing your name
because it seems
like everyone walks the streets with rage
you could see it in my eyes
it makes me go insane
it make me wanna tell everyone
"what the puck is the game"
— but —
can you play chess
i bet you wouldn't put your life on it
let's make a bet
but what's the difference
between the streets and the board
we're all pawn looking to score
lace your game up
with life
— not ice

-Jennifer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We admire your desire to change and do right, because it will never happen unless you really want it to! And we can feel your desire to be out of and to stay out of this place! However, we see a few dangers signs here and there in your extensive and inclusive poem. For example, smoking weed to feel relaxed at school — oh no, to do your best at school you need your mind to be clear, and marijuana definitely changes what and how you can think. If you're smart enough to fake it at school high, then you need to be wise enough not to smoke at school so your intelligence can "dance" (as you put in your poem) unfettered. Also, and we thank you for your honesty (since lying will not help you make the change you say you truly want to make) — you write that "the game is so tight" and that you and your brother will not pass it up, despite the ugly details you enumerate about everyone's rage and how it makes you insane. If life is like chess, you need to see it's the moves you do not make that can be as important, or even more important, than the ones you do. Moreover, anyone who's been in and out of juvenile hall, needs to play a defensive game, 'cause you're already vulnerable — it's like starting a game already down a piece (which does not mean you cannot win, you feel?). So lace your game up with living life right!

From The Beat: Yes, yes, yes — the pen' is nothing less than hell on earth, even more hellish than the ghetto's turf, 'cause the demons in there possess a man whole, especially the ones who'll never leave till they give up their soul. Of course, the brain's stronger than concrete walls, and that's why those on the outs listen within for the shot calls. But who'd volunteer to be a prince in hell, when in an earthly paradise he still might dwell. And again it depends on the strength of his mind, 'cause a young thug must decide to leave the street life behind. Then the shot he calls, keeps him out of hall, jail and pen', as he reclaims his purpose in life and begins to breathe in freedom again — as inspiration carries him past his past sins.

Time

Hours go by fast.
Days go by faster,
but I'm trapped in the corner.
I don't know when I'm getting out.
I'm sweating my case.
I've been here too long.
I got myself in this hole
and I can't find the map
to get out.

-Lost, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Excellent writing. Terrific last line. By the way, if you really want to find your way out of this mess you will.

Staring At These Walls

I can't stand staring at these walls. To think I'm here just makes me fall.
I got stabbed nine times 'cause I was dropping dimes.
Now I'm locked up because of crimes.
I'm in pain on my left side.
But what can I do?
I just have to hide.
People ask if I'm gonna let it slide.
Now I'm Triste trying to say a Christe.
But I want them to leave me in peace, eh.
Nine times I got shanked and I can't get it quite out of my mind.
Everything is going so slow, so I'm sending this little flow for the snow.
So I'm just sitting here now, hoping they let me go.

-Triste, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: And a skillful flow it is. When we get a piece like this, we always wonder how much is pure imagination and how much of it is based on fact. We hope you'll be safe when you get back to the outs, but it's gonna take plenty of hard work on your part. Ready? Hope so.

The Perfect Home

Hey, this is Lil' Seven, just chilling, killing time. Well, I was thinking way back, and to tell you the truth, I don't have a perfect home. It might sound funny, but I don't.
To me, being locked up is OK.

The only thing that I miss is my family, and my little girl who is about to be born. That is the only thing that I will really miss.

Other things, I don't really trip. But I want to tell all those vatos that are getting out soon – be with your family. Spend all your time with your family. Because I have a family, but I am not getting out for a good long time. And being away from my family – that's not right.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You are in a difficult spot Uriel. But you are facing your difficulty with courage. And your advice to your friends is good. We always appreciate hearing from you.

Luck, Rain, Dust

I wish it would rain and that snow would fall.
With the luck I have, it might happen.
Then I'd complain about my aching wrist.
With all this dust on my skin, I can't sleep.
Now I doubt this is going to happen.
Maybe tomorrow.

-Rene', Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Maybe, maybe not. You never know what your imagination will bring. Tell us how it all turned out.

What I'd Like To Forget

I would like to forget that I'm locked up in the hall.
It sucks being locked up and not being able to see the people you love.

And we have to follow staff rules.

Now I know how a dog feels when it's in a cage.
And I want to forget that we wear the same clothes that other people wear.

I want to forget that I might get a lot of time for beating up another gang member.

I want to forget that I'm in a gang and my life is at risk.

-Irvyn, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: It's a good thing you can't forget all that, isn't it? Never again, if you value your freedom, can you forget these things. We hope you can move on with your life free of violence and a gang association that will forever keep you down.

If I Had A Talk Show

If I had a talk show I would use my political views in a fifteen minute long, silver tongued monologue acknowledging the issues of race and religion. There would also be a segment of the show where five of the audience members got five minutes each to explain their views to the audience watching the show in their homes.

I would strongly support the first and second Amendments – the right of free speech and the right to bare arms. The show would end with an update of the latest military / civilian fire arms models and a round of shooting practice at moving and non-moving targets. And at the end of the credits I would list various gun shows and competitions around the US.

-Comrade, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a pretty heavy agenda. Would you honor the rights of others, as you would have your rights respected? Do you believe in equality and equal protection for all citizens under the law?

Love And Respect

This is Uriel here, just chilling, doing time.

I am thinking of all my dead angels wondering if they're in a better place, or a worse place than this.

I guess we will never know until we die.
Until then we wait, we just sit and wait.

Love to my sister-in-law.

May she rest in peace.

Love and respect for the angels who've passed away.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: There's lots to be done while waiting for that big answer, Uriel. We suggest that you continue to teach yourself to do the things you missed out on first time around. We'd love to see you become a great reader, and ultimately, get yourself a college degree. We know you can do it.

What I Miss About My Early Childhood

What I miss about my early childhood is a lot of things, like going to school and just doing what kids do. What I really miss is have friends to play with because the friend I had respected me and never wanted me to do bad things. But as I got older, I stopped being good and I started to do bad things, like robbing people. And I started to gangbang and sell drugs.

But now I sit here and think fo' myself that I really need to stop doing things like that. But now I'm going to a group home out here, I hope soon. But until then, I'm going to be writing y'all.

-Flat Head B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you know what we like most about this piece, Connie? It's that you wrote, "...now I sit here and think fo' myself..." That's the most important thing you could do. Don't follow those bangers and other low-riders who are always in trouble themselves and whose advice gets you into trouble. Follow your own heart and head telling you what is right and what is wrong.

What Stands In The Way

Nothing stands in my way to live a positive life. I don't want to change, but the things about life I love, I'd rather have.

I never thought I'd be saying this, but now I have a girl that I love, and always a family that I'd rather stick by. Like I said, I don't like the life I'm starting to lead, but I realize there's something worth staying out of the system for. I know my old life of crime and the other things I used to do will never completely go away, but that's alright. I'm staying out of the system when I get out.

-System free, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Good! We hope you mean the memories will never completely go away, not that the lifestyle will never go away.

Growing Up

Growing up fo' me was hard. I did more rippin' and runnin' than most grown men. I was cursed with parents — not ordinary parents, but ones who put their addiction before their own flesh and blood. My parents didn't care about much, just where their next fix is going to come from.

I been victim of it all, from rape, neglect and poverty. Now in fighting my own battles with drugs. Whose fault is that, I wonder? It would have helped if I had a place to call home, but at the age of 16 that is too much to ask for.

-Bam Bam, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Of course it isn't too much to ask for a home when you're 16. You deserved nothing less, and you got cheated. But you know something, Bam Bam, your parents also got cheated. Their drug addictions cheated them out of the pure pleasure of parenthood. They missed out big time because they were suffering from a disease that overwhelmed everything in their lives, including their responsibilities to you. We're very sorry about that, and about all the terrible things that have happened to you as a result. But like you said, now you are fighting your own battles, and you have to win. All the things your parents missed out on are there for you to enjoy — but only if you do what they did not do, which is to confront your demons and your addictions, learn how to control them, and then move forward with clear eyes and a clear head.

What I Miss The Most From Early Childhood

What I miss the most from my early childhood is my pop. The last time I seen my pops was in 1997, but I never really knew my pop. Sometimes that's just the way it is. Sometimes, that's just life.

I still got love for my pops but if he try to come in my life I don't know what I would do or say. All I knew about my dad was that he was in and out of jail. I'm not trying to be like that, but since my dad never been in my life, that just not me. When I have a child, I will take care of it, and now I know I will teach my child to do the right thing. I'm going to teach my child things my dad never taught me, and that's everything.

But this is how I feel about my childhood. When I was young I was like, "To hell with my life! I wish I was dead and that my mom never had me!" But I'm glad she did. God put me on this earth for a reason and when I get out I'm gonna go His path and go the right way and stay that way.

-Man Man B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: First, we're really sad that you felt your life was not worth living when you were younger. No child should have to feel those things. But then, we're also so happy that you now recognize that you are worth a lot, that you are truly valuable, and that you have a purpose in life. As for your dad, maybe he had the same kind of messed up childhood that you did, and he didn't know how to be a father. We're not making excuses, just trying to understand.

I Look Out

I look out at the stars.
At night you seem so close.
It feels like I'm bleeding from the inside,
slowly dying.
All I've got is my family, now.
I pray to God everyday to help me get out.
The clock keeps ticking.
Until that front door opens....

-Sadly waiting, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Nice poem. A good, sad poem. What will you do upon your release home? What's the plan once you leave the hall? What makes you happy?

The Fire Of Music

The fire of music burns inside my mind.
Each song engages a unique image, or sound memory,
so pristine, so pure, it lets me know my mind is near.

-Michael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Are you also a musician, or just a listener? By the way, nicely written.

Uncle Snoopy

W'at up Beat? How's it going wit' y'all? It's me again, that vato Goofy, still up in this Max Unit in San Franpsycho.

Well on the topic about what I miss the most from my childhood. Damn! Now why do y'all have to bring back my memories? You know there's a lot of things I miss from my childhood, like my homies that passed away while I was barely starting this street life. Shhh, even the system wasn't as screwed up as it is now. Narcs wouldn't harass for fun like they do today.

But on the serio (serious) side, what I miss the most is my Uncle Snoopy. Since I first went with my pops to LA to pick up my uncle Mickey and Snoopy, I got real close to them. But I've always been closer to Snoopy. People say we look alike and both our birthdays are on the same day. The last time I seen him was back in 2004 in El Salvador when he had just been deported from Soledad state prison. Now he doing 15 with that "L", so I won't see him in a long hour.

Well that times about up for me so Al Rato. Trucha.

-Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's really sad to read that the uncle you most identify with is locked up for at least the next 15 years! That's not something that anyone should have to endure, so we hope when you say you're closest to him that you're not so close you plan to follow in those footsteps! You're on a potential path to freedom and a new kind of life, but you have to make some tough choices. We hope you know that, because if you fail to choose, you'll soon be back to the same life that led you here and led your uncle to where he is. That would not only be a tragic loss for you, it would be a tragic loss for us all! You have too much to give to allow yourself to be enslaved either by the system or by someone else's idea of what your life should be.

What Makes Me Stronger

Hey Beat — so you want to know what makes me stronger. The main thing that works for me is meditation. I gather all the freakin' negative thoughts, put them in a little ball, and release it into outer space. And that cleanses my mind so I can begin twenty minutes of warrior yoga, which strengthens my body.

Do you, the reader, have enough self-security to do yoga? When you're mature, you should.

I would also have to say that all the females in my life have been there for me to pull me up out of the mud. My comrades keep me on track, too.

-Michael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Meditation has been used for thousands of years to quiet the restless mind and focus one's attention. What do you wish to focus your attention on, Michael?

Have You Ever

Have you ever once has a heart filled with love,
the next thing you know it's filled with death, violence,
hatred, and guns?

Have you ever once had a dream,
but you put it all off for a get-money scheme?

Have you ever once had a heart,
but when you seen reality it was torn apart?

Have you ever dreamed of a good life,
but you realized the 'hood is all you gon' know all you
life?

Have you ever woke up one day and said I want out,
but you got 20 years to life and realized there's no
getting out?

-Dell B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: All of your hopeful questions end with hopeless answers, which is very sad. Have you ever had the opposite experience (expecting something bad to happen, but something good happens instead)?

My childhood

What I miss from my childhood is just being a child and getting what I want, playing with all my sisters and brothers. Just being a kid was a special thing to me. Having my grandma and grandpa take me out, meaning taking me to the zoo, Great America, camping. Most of all being around older people learning from them what's right and what's wrong.

Going to elementary school, learning my ABC's and 123's, not being a special student in school, getting good grades, seeing another day to live and being blessed with a good family. Even though we have our ups and downs and we fuss and fight, it was just good being a kid having your parents proud of you for what you are doing. All that is a real good feeling. That's what I miss about my childhood.

-Starr GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Our childhoods fly by so fast that we sometimes don't even have time to think back on all the fun we had. Of course, there are still things you can do as an adult that you did in childhood, like camping, Great America, and going to school and getting good grades to make your parents proud.

Early Childhood

My early childhood was a good one. I was full of joy, kindness, and hard work. When I was a youngin', I was active in sports, was doing good academically. I was innocent from a corrupt world. Although poor, I was not limited by financial problems — or was it that I didn't care about the money then? Only family and friend were my concern. But what I really miss is my father. My name for him was "Big Mike."

-Mario B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: With just a little more effort, Mario, this could have been a piece of the week. It makes us want to know a lot of things that you don't write about. For example, how did you lose that innocence? What made you stop being concerned only for family and friends, and start being concerned about the things that ultimately led you here? And most of all, we want to know about Big Mike. Tell us what you miss the most about your father.

Life

See, the way I see it, life is messed up — black people killing black people and Mexicans stabbin' Mexicans. And out of all that, none of us really see what's goin' on. See I ain't gon lie. To a young ninja like me, that's the life — get shot at goin' to party getting' high and messin' with women.

But at some point in time, this shhh gotta stop. It's time for us young people to change up. Instead of us loadin' up guns, let's load up our brains and learn something new and not what the 'Jects taught us, 'cause I know I don't want to end up six feet deep wit' my eyes closed. So if you don't wanna end up like my big homie, then change yo' life.

-Macky O B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It seems like you know what the future holds for you if you don't flip the script soon. No one is promised tomorrow, Macky, so we hope you don't just keep putting off this change to some future date that never comes until it's too late to make a change. If you keep living the life of that "young ninja" you describe, then the chances are really big that you'll never grow to be an old ninja! That's too serious a consequence to take lightly. It's clear you've been thinking about this. Don't stop thinking.

Safety is Perfection

The perfect home is a place where you're with loved ones and don't have to worry about anything bad happening. It's a place that is safe and comfortable, where you know you can leave your family and come home to it being the same - safe.

-Lil' Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Home should definitely be a place where you feel safe, protected and comfortable. It's nice to know that even when things get too crazy and hectic out on the streets, there is a place for peace. We hope you find that home if you don't already have it.

Me and my bra on the bus

Going through pain an' stress

He's crying every day

'Cause he's not with us

I miss you, Bra, I love you, Bra

No matter what you say

You're always gonna be with us

So don't cry, 'cause I love you, no matter what

Remember about the stuff

That we did

So never shed tears

'Cause you know how we live

We crazy and we never show fear

So keep it tough an' rough

An' never show people that you a punk

An' remember, Bra

I love you, no matter what

An' me an' mother an' Baby Sister

Will wait to you return to us

So keep your head up

By your Bra

And you know forever us

-Lil' Rider B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We can only guess where your brother is from this sad poem about loss and pain. Is he locked up? What do you think having two sons under the control of someone other than family does to your mom and your sister? If you and your family are reunited some time in the future, will you continue the crazy life that you brag about here — the life that led you to be separated from the people you love the most and that love you the most? You'll have to make a choice — which do you love more, the "tough and rough" world that takes you here (and your brother there), or the family that needs you? You can choose the street, but just be prepared for more of these consequences.

Bad News

Some bad news: last week on Wednesday when my dad came to visit me he told me something. Now you know it's bad when your dad's face turns a different color. He had told me that my homie Ton aka Flaco from Fremont died in Santa Rita Jail from a seizure.

To find out more, I asked someone else and they said that when he started having the seizure, the other inmates tried telling staff but they covered his window instead. He went into a coma and now he's on life support. Hope he makes it.

-Jacka Trax, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope he makes it too. We don't know how much time we have on this earth so it is important that you let this be a lesson. We know it's hard out there and we know it's even harder when you lose the people close to you, but think hard — where do you want to spend your last moments?

My Own Topic—An Interview With Slow Pain

SP: What's up to all en la torcida (jail)? Today I am goin' to write about my own topic and that life in the barrio.

I lived in war every day because that's the way I liked to live. I love my barrio and they love me back. I'm down for my barrio and they down for me. One love to all
Please interview us today about the war in the barrios of El Salvador, where I'm from.

TBW: Of course, Slow Pain. What do you want to say about your life in El Salvador?

SP: We come from Central America where the games are hard. If you come to my country, you gonna see the real gangsta life. If you come to Central America, it's ugly for you, because we got the best game and the biggest in the whole world.

TBW: Why don't you describe the game for people who have never been to Salvador?

SP: Everybody scared to the game.

TBW: Why?

SP: Homies from over there will take your head if you're from another set. People in Salvador killin' people for no reason. They runnin' at you with machetes.

This one guy, he got into a fight with a police officer. The police officer pulled his gun on him, but the guy pulled it away from him when they were fighting, and the other officers all drew their guns on him. They threw him in prison. They said he was tryna escape. The police shot him.

The kids, the gang leaders, got cell phones, guns, machetes, knives, everything they want. They shot callers. You can be from the same gang—if you make a mistake, they'll kill you. It's too hot. You don't want to do it.

When people from California go over there to Salvador,

gangs there don't like gangs from California. You have to be in exactly the same set here as from there (or it's on.)

TBW: That's ridiculous.

SP: Yeah.

TBW: Do you approve of this?

SP: No. If the homies in Central America tell you to do it, you have to do it.

TBW: What if you refuse?

SP: They're going to do you like an enemy. They have to letters in their faces (tattoos of their gang allegiances) and stuff, tryna prove to people that they're crazy.

TBW: Why do they want people to think they're crazy?

SP: So their enemies will be afraid of them, will leave them alone, and to get their respect. Once you get your respect, you can do whatever you want.

TBW: What if you want to leave the gang?

SP: Oh, no, you can't do that. They'll kill you (if you try.) They'll put you on the (death) list. They'll put your best friend to kill you. He can get close to you. If you name is on the list, he will kill you.

TBW: What if he doesn't want to, because you're such good friends?

SP: If he gets the order, he has to, or they'll kill him.

TBW: Well, maybe it's a good thing that you don't live in El Salvador any longer, Slow Pain. That sounds like some serious mess down there.

SP: Yeah.

-Slow Pain LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Thank you for telling all of us about your experiences. It's so sad and tragic. Now that you are in the United States, you have the opportunity to walk away from the gang life in the Mission, yes walk away. It still takes courage to leave your old friends, but it can be done. El Salvador is so different. Here in San Francisco we have plenty of support and programs if you want to better your life. Good luck!

RIP Cell

Damn bra, still thinking about all them good times, still not understanding why you had to leave so soon, but now you're up above watching over the family and the squad.

Ninjas don't know what I'm really goin' through, but nobody knows what mom's goin' through.

This shhh ain't easy, night and day just knowin' that my bra is six feet under, all them good times now just a memory that I think about now that your gone and nothing could never bring you back.

No matter how much you all tell me that it will be all right my ninja is dead.

But I know I'm gonna see you in the next life. I need a better understanding, ninjas don't know how much ninjas really miss bra, it's like a damn tragedy has hit us. This shhh ain't cool, ain't no way to really deal with this, the only thing helpin' me through this is knowin' that you up in peace watchin' over us bra. we gon' shine bra and it's all for you bra.

Rest in peace my ninja, we miss you bra and we'll never forget you.

-Lil' Naud, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We have this dream, when we read these pieces. We have a dream where you get out of the streets, hook up with a program that helps put you through college (like Omega Boys' Club or Positive Minds), you go on to become an architect, a teacher, a great leader. You open a school or a park or a rec center for kids with trouble like what you've been through, and when they ask you what they want to write on the engraving for the Great Thing you've built, you say, "I want it dedicated to Marcellus Haley". That would be shining, don't you think? Or when you graduate from college and you're walking down the aisle, you wave that diploma and funny looking hat and you look up at the sky and you say, "This is dedicated to you, Cell!" THAT would be a great way to shine.

The System

What's up, Beat? How life been treating you? This is Loun from Hayward, comin' at you from 150 (Alameda County) Juvenile Hall, and I'm going to be writing about my life in the system.

I can remember when I was twelve, that's how old I was when I first got caught up in the system. Now I'm about to be eighteen, and I'm still in the system! I wish I was twelve again! I'd find new people to hang out with, but I was probably going to get caught up in the system anyways.

I hope the judge lets me go home in three months, when I turn eighteen, since I turned myself in and already did over five hundred days now of my max' time in the Halls. I know if I get in trouble again, I'm not going juvenile hall but to Santa Rita (county jail). But when I get out, I'm going back to school. And I'm gettin' a job.

-Loun, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can feel how the system doesn't just incarcerate your body but also infiltrates your mind, like when you say you'd hang with different people if you could be twelve again — and then you say it wouldn't have made a difference. Why not? Whom we chill with, what we talk about, how we spend our time both work (or school) time and free time — those are the things that keep your head straight or set you up for jail bait. But more importantly, you still need to change your playgrounds, playmates and playthings, to stay out of Rita. Do it, and life will be sweeter.

My Childhood

What I miss about my childhood is doing nothing but having fun! Playing with toys and laughing! And when you get older, you have to take care of yourself more than what you have to do when you're a child — that's another thing I miss about my childhood.

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you get older, you have to be as responsible as a good parent who watches over and provides for his/her child, insuring that the child can concentrate on fun. And if you do that for yourself by meeting your increasingly adult responsibilities in a world that's real, you can keep the child inside you — joyous, playful, happy and free!

Life Is Precious

This is Johnathon aka Smokey, and I want to say that life is a very precious thing. I'm just starting to realize that, see, since about the age of ten, I've been gang banging, and I've seen, heard and done a lot of things. Some I regret. Some I won't be able to forget.

You have to put a lot of thought into what you want to do with your life. I've been in an out of jail, and it's gotten old. My baby sister, Isabella Olivia G—, was just born, and I have to be in her life! Yet I can't do that if I'm doing those things I used to do. She is my life right now! I have to set an example for her.

I love her, and even though she is only ten days old, I know she loves me 'cause she's real comfortable in my arms. I'm done with those streets. It's time to help myself.

-Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That little girl will love you for the rest of her life, and whether that love supports her and helps her through life or it becomes a source of pain, loss and fear, depends on the decisions you make and the actions you take. We pray that you mean what you say. But don't judge her love by her level of comfort in your arms, 'cause a distressed baby needs a father's loving arms just as much if not more than a comfortable one. It's on you as her father to offer her love and comfort either way. And if you do it for a lifetime, trust us, you'll have a source of pride, comfort and love in your heart and mind that will neither die nor decline.

My Childhood

What I miss is when I was innocent and young.

I never used to worry about doing something that would be a violation of probation.

What I miss is when I wasn't on probation. Living a normal life.

That's what I miss the most. My freedom

I feel that even while I'm on the outs and on probation I'm not free yet.

-Margarita, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The innocence of youth would probably cure a lot of the world's problems—but life has a way of changing us. We hope that you find a way to let your experiences mature you rather than harden you, and that you work your program so that you can be truly free someday.

Behind These Walls

The hardest test that I have experienced is being behind these walls, thinking of my next master plan. I have also been thinking about the mistake that I made to get in here and remind myself that I never want to make that mistake again. Sitting behind these walls is a new experience for me 'cause I'm not made to be locked behind no doors. But yeah, that is the hardest test that I've experienced.

-Lil' Bow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't think anyone is "made" to be locked up. Some people can deal with it better for whatever reason and some people may be better at faking like it's not that serious but these four walls are no place for any person, especially a young one. We are glad to hear that you are using this time to reflect on where you have been and where you want to be. Don't be too hard on yourself - we all make mistakes. The real mistake is making the same error twice.

This Life

it's me ... it's the streets

it's the weed ... it's the 'e'

it's the dope fiends that keep running back to me

it's the tricks... that get us reach

it's the gold we all love to hold

it's from fruitvale to the high street

it's the ghetto ... it's in me

it's my baggy jeans to my two-three x-1 white tee

it's the money i need

that my mama don't give me

it's the shoes i want

so i guess i gotta re-cop

now i'm back out there on the block

trying to sell the trees, the 'e'

and whatever it is you need

i'm on me "bi-ci-cleta" riding in the middle of the street

cash me out for this two-gee dollah alameda bike

that my brah-brah came up on last night

"come check it out, come see how smooth it rides"

"... yeah it's a two-thousand dolla' mountain bike"

my tia looks at my brother with surprise

lizard went bug-eyed

asking "where'd you get your bike?"

looking so confused

with the fear in her eyes

and we keep on walking with our

heads up high

-Jennifer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We sure hope this is a "the way we were" piece, 'cause it's really the anatomy of a disease. And you can hold your head as high as you want, the both of you, but if you don't see it's a mental disease, you both are through. And call your auntie "Lizard" if you want to, but the fear in her eyes should be in your heart, 'cause she sees the end of it when you're at the start! The wrinkles in her face reflect the wrinkles in her brain, and the wisdom of experience has more relevance than youth maintains. It's one terrific poem about two youngsters going wrong and thinking they've got it right, getting high on the product that keeps them on the block day and night. Admitting to the problem is only halfway to facing the truth, the other half is admitting your life of drug sales, theft and drug abuse — is out of control. You think you're playing the game, but it's playing you, if the truth be told. Until you're ready to count in the pain of incarceration, the truth you need to be facing is held on hold. We can see you're bold on the out, but bold on the inside is what we're talking about. It's time to try to raise the mind in your head high and not just the way it looks instead seen from the outside.

Why I Love

I didn't fall in love with you 'cause I wanted to hit.

Why'd you fall in love with me?

Because ... you were in love with me, and would do the corniest, cutest things to show me. And I wanted to show you the same affection... and the same if not more love.

Plus you have pretty brown eyes.

-Mainy Hyena, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We love the way you set this poem up as an imaginary dialogue. All the great poets - from Yeats and Whitman and Blake and all the way back to the ancient Greeks, have used these kinds of conversations as part of their style, so you've discovered (on your own) a great tradition, walking, as an artist should, in the footsteps of giants.

Man, Can I Be a Wonderful Man?

Man, wishing I was a wonderful man, who'd always have good, wonderful things, like a wonderful place to lay my head when I need to lay it down — and the place will be at home, where I lay my head at, in a wonderful place. And like going to my brother's place, too, and to my sister's wonderful place.

And it always be a good thing that I can be able to go to my family's house to have a wonderful time — but now I'm in jail! And my freedom is taken from me, because I wasn't doing a wonderful thing. I was out in the streets doing a crazy thing, when I was supposed to be at my mom's wonderful house and asleep, which I wasn't.

And look at me now! I wish I had never did a crime, so that I could be with my family right now — having a wonderful time!

-Glen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The most wonderful thing about a house, the thing that makes a house truly wonderful, is the love that lives inside it — being with your family in a house that filled with love. Yup! And now you see that you never should have left your mother's house at night to run the streets, 'cause you committed a crime and got caught up for it and lost your freedom to be at home with your family having a wonderful time. Remember this when you're home free and feel tempted to run the streets next time.

What I Miss

There's a lot of things I miss about my childhood. What I miss the most is being innocent. It seems like everything is just fun and just a game. Sometimes when I get mad, I just think about my childhood. It frees the stress in my mind.

The best memories I have is when I lived in Milipitas, because that's where my childhood started.

-Gabriel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think that all that innocence and goodness and fun is still inside you? Under the stress, under the struggle, under the whole streetlife that holds you back? Does our childhood ever really go away, or does it just stay buried, where we need to work to reconnect to it?

What I miss from my early childhood

I miss my innocence and my close relationship/ friendship with my grandma.

I miss being spoiled by her.

I miss all the time I had and also the fact I was worry free.

Childhood memory: Going to church with my grandma and neighbor

then coming home to play in backyard.

Making mud pies and playing.

Laughing and jumping rope.

-Grandma's Granddaughter, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Innocence is something we all miss once we grow up. Wouldn't it be nice if we could hold on to that way of looking at the world forever? If we could continue getting joy out of making mud-pies and jumping rope? Ahhh.

Football, Apple Pie and Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom, I would go to my grandma's house and eat some of her famous apple pie! And I'd sit and tell jokes with the rest of the family.

Sometimes I think if I wasn't in jail, I would be somewhere playin' football, my favorite sport. My grandma always told me I would be something greater in the world and that I still have a chance to change. All my life, most people told me I was never going to amount to nothing, and I fell into it!

But being in jail made me figure out everything that I wasted by skipping school and disobeying my parents. I've learned to focus on the positive things in life instead of the bad ones. The outside is better than! So, a word of advice: Jail ain't the place!

-Terrance, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, you'll have another chance to change how you choose to live your life. Going to school and doing right, or ditching school and staying out all night — it's all up to you. Everything you say here is cool. You'll only get so many chances though, so don't act a fool.

Effortless Stain

enervating to the thought
that the battle i fought
was lost in an effect
to pay off the cost
that i tried to persuade
with an apology of roses
that i never stopped to smell on the way
come to find that a bouquet of orchids
that's stained with my blood of forfeit
won't fix anything

-Jacobs, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Self-sacrifice in the name of love is all well and good, but when it fails to achieve what it hoped it would, and the suffering entailed becomes more than it should, then there's no benefit to spilling heart's blood, and when the bleeding's stanch'd the tears still flood.

When I get out

When I get out, I'm gon' call my brah and all my patnas! Then we gon' squad up and get on hella females! But before I do all that, I'm gon' apologize to my mom for going back to the Hall so many times.

Then I'm gon' go get a job, so I can make some money the right way, not the wrong way — so I won't go back to jail for tryin'a make some money. Then I'm gon' go back to school, so I can keep my grades up and continue to do good. Then I'm gone have time to go dumb the right way, not the bad way like poppin' pills and stuff, 'cause that's not doin' nothing but gettin' me put in jail — so I'm gone stop doin' that!

But besides all that, I'm gon' be coo' and just lay low for a minute. I'm not tryin'a be in the Hall wearin' these AlaCo clothes, 'cause this shhh ain't coo'! But anyways, I got a baby on the way, and I don't want to be the type of dad that's always in jail. I want to be there for my baby, so he/she can have a father figure in life.

-Marquise, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We congratulate you on your positive state of mind, 'cause a baby needs a father who's ready to do right in life instead of kicking it with the squad all night. Hmm, so that first sentence worries us a little, 'cause your squad won't really be there for your mom or your baby'mama or your goals in life. But they're ready to pop pills and stay up all night. You're young, but you chose to have a baby, so now you're a father and a son.

Childhood

What I miss about my childhood is that when I was six years old, my dad lived in Stockton. He used to come to West Oakland just to come visit us and pick us up.

I was so happy to see him! We'd always be ready when he came, and he'd take us everywhere — to Great America, to Water World! We'd always have a good time. But he stopped coming.

I was hella mad when he stopped. I used to ask my mom, "Where's Daddy?" And she'd say, "I don't know." So, now I don't even know where he at.

-Brandon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, this story went from happy to sad in the blink of an eye, which is exactly how it must have felt to you — and the sadness stays. Even if he went to prison, he could write. Do you think something happened to him? Or do you think he just turned his back on y'all and just kept walking?

I used to ask my mom, "Where's
Daddy?" And she'd say, "I don't know."

What I Believe

I believe half of these people are fake.

I believe half of these people are snitches.

I believe people might come to court and snitch on me.

I believe I got a chance to win and get out.

I's not hard to believe

that they are going to charge me as an adult.

I do believe my prayer of Jesus could help me through

I believe these people in higher power fakin'

-Marcus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The sad truth is that both inside and on the outs, most of us are "fakin'", trying to pretend that we are more than we are, that we've done more than we've done, trying to hide the part of us that is weak, or scared, or hurt. So we say we're tougher/harder/richer than we really are, to a bunch of other people who are ALSO weak, scared, and hurt. While you face this case, and all your stresses, pay attention to the way the other young men in the unit, just like you, stress alone in their rooms and try and play it all cool when they're sitting four people to a table. We know right now you have other stuff on your mind, like fighting this case, but maybe realizing that everyone in hear has the same fears (including the fear of being snitched on), it'll make it easier to get through the times ahead.

Two Hours . . . and Ticking

If I had two hours of freedom, I would go visit my big brother's grave. I'd tell him to watch over me — and over my family while I'm away because I can't be there for them now.

And since I'm the oldest now, since he passed, I'm the man of the house now. So I know that I shouldn't be getting into trouble!

With the remaining hour, I would go visit my granny to see how she is doing, because she has been more of a mother to me than my real mom has been.

-Troublefree, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're not where you want to be, but you do clearly see where you need to be — home with your family, living responsibly and trouble-free.

Do My Thang For Two Hours

If I had two hours of freedom, I'm gonnago do my thang, if you know what I mean, first, for thirty minutes. Then I'm gonna go smoke twenty blunts for thirty minutes; then cut back to the turf and think for ten minutes. Then I'll hop in the corna store and cop a fifth of Remy and kill it in twenty minutes! And I'm gonna spend my last thirty minutes saying, "Fuhgit you!" — to everybody!

-Young C, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Written like an up-and-coming drug addict, 'cause even in your fantasy world it's all about trying to get out of your mind with excess and then freely displaying your anger. No disrespect intended. All we're trying to say is that your fantasy is strictly an illusion of freedom; in reality you're enslaved by your anger and your desire to get out of your mind. What you need most is to learn how to live in your skin and be good with it, that's freedom.

Makin' A Change

Starting now, I'm making a change in my life! I'm realizing what the system is doing to me. They're trying to find a way to stop my upcoming success and to shut me down, but I'm not going to let that happen. So for now on, I will do things differently. I know the change is gonna be difficult to make, but I'm gon' push myself to make it.

My first change, is not to get into any more arguments with staff. My second change is: if it don't concern me, the issue doesn't matter. My third change, is to work on my impulse control and to stop reacting quickly. My fourth change, is to not let small things get me mad. My fifth change, is to only speak when spoken to. My sixth change, is keep a low and respectful voice tone. My seventh change, is to stop blaming/complaining/justifying and to be responsible for my own action. And my very last one, is limiting my talking skills to a minimum of sentences.

I pray that God will give me the strength to follow through with these changes, 'cause I know that the devil might try to tempt me to backslide, but I won't let him succeed! So, from now on, I see most who work in the system as hating demons.

-Issues In My Life, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, we're with you all the way until that last sentence, 'cause we don't see how imagining most staff to be (subhuman or inhuman) demons is going to help you with any of the changes you plan to make. Maybe what you mean to say is that regardless of the intentions of this or that staff member, you're going to make an effort to what's right for its own sake and for your own sake, not just to please staff. Then it doesn't matter so much if staff doesn't understand or see how hard you're trying to improve your behavior. It matters most that you see it, understand it, and keep doing it. If that's the plan, it's guaranteed that when enough time has passed, the whole world will see it, because you will have broken down all expectation of what you used to do in the past. Everyone will see — partially because everyone will have gotten so used to seeing the new you that they'll expect to see — the new you!

Early Childhood

One of the most earliest moments I remember about my childhood is when my auntie threw me my first birthday party ever. It was fun! I got my first paycheck, my first pair of Jordans, my first bike — I can't even remember all of the fancy stuff that I got!

In my auntie's house, I also got my first bedroom. She still lives in that house today! It was cute, 'cause I got a basketball hoop in my room. I must have been the most spoiled baby in the world, 'cause that year my auntie was a mega-success in the Philippines. Over here she is a mega-icon in her community, too. I love her! And when she took me to the beach called "Bora Bora" in the Philippines, it was fun 'cause they treated me like a king!

Also my last birthday party was two years ago. I went to Las Vegas for a month, and it was eighteen-dummy fun! Also I went on all the rides in Las Vegas hotel. My hotel was called the MGM Grand Hotel. But now all I want for my birthday is to get out here! I miss my lifestyle, my family, my apartment, my homies. I wrote this from my heart, and I did my best to recall important memories to me.

I dedicate this piece to my family and to staff personnel here who act like family to me. But to my real family and to my homies, I will be home.

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nothing makes a child's eyes go wider than new toys, but as we get older, we discover it's our loved ones who are the real and permanent gifts in our lives. Of course, you miss your home and your family, and even your homies. But now, you need to figure out what role your relationship with your homies plays in getting you incarcerated. Because if chilling with them on the outs, mean getting in trouble and losing your freedom, then it's time to look for new friends. But your family will be your family forever!



What's Love? Will I Find Out?

broken promises, shattered dreams
will i ever meet my queen
my heart longs for the love i once dreamed
could it be i'm such a good man
that these girls take advantage of me
probably the girl i loved turned my heart to stone
now i'll be forever cold
wakin' up empty, never whole
to be loved and have fun is my goal
i have a lot of love but don't know who to give it to
maybe one day i'll find her
will you find love for you

-Benjamin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes, for a time, the only love we find is the love we give away. Don't let your heart turn to stone, or love will never be more to you than a word in a poem. No matter what, continue to nourish love in your heart and let it show, and then, when and where you least expect it, you'll find love redirected back at you.

Miss My Family, Especially Grandma RIP

She told us stories too about the big, bad wolf and Jack and the beanstalk. She also took me to Hometown Buffet and to Denny's. She was light-skinned, and her daughter braided her hair.

My grandma took more care of me. I chose to move with them, him and her, 'cause I visited 'em on time, and then I would just go over there. So my grandma said to my mom, "Why don't the children stay with us?" And she said, "Okay." And it was good staying at my grandma's house. She bought me Game Boy and Sega and Play Station 2.

But my mom worked. My dad was just sittin' around. He'd take care of me, but on his day off. I'd say, "Let's go to the park." And he'd say, "Ha! I'm too lazy." My dad worked at Fed X. The toughest one we had was my grandpa. But the person I miss the most is my grandma. I love my whole family, but she is the one who's gone.

Spending time with my granny before she died, once she took me to eat Chinese food on Twenty-third. We ate shrimp fried rice, sweet-and-sour ribs, honey ribs, chow mein, egg rolls, everything! I was ten at the time. Well, she died two years ago. She died of pneumonia.

My grandpa takes care of me now. He's nice. He takes care of me, but I was here for my birthday when I turned thirteen, so I didn't get to spend time with him. I don't want visits 'cause when they leave, I get mad and go bad 'cause my heart busts.

Another memory was when for Christmas my grandma bought me a bike, Legos, a Ranger scooter. She was a good cook, too. She'd make chicken so crispy and good, also corn bread and spaghetti.

-Mike, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sorry if we messed up any of the words. It was hard to read (our typist couldn't read it at all), but we tried our best. Occasionally a crucial word was just plain missing, and we had to guess. If we got it too twisted, tell us, and we'll try to correct it. Cause one thing we're sure of — you love and miss your family, most especially your grandma who loved you very much and whose generosity you clearly will never forget! It's hard to be away from loved ones, but it's good to feel loved.

Treating Strangers Better Than Those We Love

I do not know why we treat strangers better then love ones.

I still strive to see why I hurt my love ones.

I am sixteen and a half and I have just came to my senses and have told myself

I need to stop taking my loved ones for granted.

I am just noticing how every time I go to jail my loved ones are all
that was there,
every court date, visit, etc., but the strangers or friends are nowhere
to be found

and I give them my all my respect and my love.

My mind is all physical and mental.

Why do I do so?

But I have to stop it.

My loved ones have always been there through thick and thin.

I will learn to appreciate them now.

I will learn to love them.

I will stop putting people that don't care for me like I care for them first.

So from now on I will learn to love my loved ones like they love and care for me.

I will no longer care for the ones that don't care for me.

I will say my hi's and bye's but I will no longer care.

So that's my word.

-Knight, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope you follow through on your word. Isn't it strange that sometimes we mistreat the people who care the most for us? It's so easy to take advantage when you think that those folks will always be around to love and support us, but that's no way to be. We're really glad you're thinking differently about these things.

You Don't Know Me

i can tell i'm on my way
just a few mo' moves i gotta make
a few mo' chances i gotta take
being in the mob is a job
everyday is a promise i can break
the fast lane
yeah so much cash came
the boys know my name
but they don't know my face
my young patna got popped wit' K
caught a case and wasted G's
on a lawyer just to get thirty-four years
chest to the flo'
push-up's to ya chest get so'
people ain't nothin' only let a hustla know
in between time playahs become hatahs
and if you knew me fo' hella long you'll still be a stranger
you don't know me

-Clyde, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every lil' hoodrat learns the phrase, "Don't blame the playa, blame the game." But even OG's insist that the blame's got to be switched, and because they can't stand the heat of admitting that they brought on their own defeat, they continue to blame all their glitches some snitches or other. Man, being in the mob isn't just a job, it's a fate; tricked in by the money, jails hospitals and death await. You want to call it survival, and maybe it was when you were a youngster, but comes a day you've got to find a way to quit the game. You can choose to blame some punk for your refusal to face the truth, but you know it's a lie. So fall to your knees and pray for one more chance to try to do right. "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Real talk.

Thinking Keeps Me Up At Night

What keeps me up at night is thinking about my mom and my situations. I am locked up and struggling to keep sane and she is on the outside with everything to handle; such as my baby, to the bills, and to just maintain.

I'm in here hurting because I am not out there helping my mom and my baby. I know that is where I should be. In here I am stressing to show the courts what is happening and I seriously want to do good. Put me on an ankle bracelet and they will see.

You could have such a good dream and then wake up to reality. It is hard to wake up if you know what I mean.

-Claudia, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona
From The Beat: It is good that you realize how important it is for you to stay out of detention due to your mother and your baby. It sounds like you now realize that you need them and they need you. What will you do different to make sure you are not separated from your family again?

Do The Crime

Doing my time,
I sit on my mat and think
about what I did in the past
all night.
Am trying to do right
but it seems like am gonna lose my fight.
I regret everything I did
growing up on streets
as a wicked kid.
It feels like my past haunts me
It leaves me crying on my knees.
My past won't let me go
But I know one day I will get out this hole

-Nathaniel, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona
From The Beat: Giving up is always easier than to keep fighting, but all things worth having, require hard work. We know that doing the right thing is often not easy and is often an uphill battle. We hope that you will continue to fight for a better life for yourself.

I Miss Home With Mama and Us

I miss bein' with my family in one home while my mama was in the house with all my brothers and sis'.

But one day it got really ugly when she all most passed away. Some hater called the police on us for being home alone. So it was just like that. But three years after that, my mama passed away — and that is when everybody I love started doing too much.

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a sad story. We know how much you miss your mother, RIP, and your brothers, most of whom are locked up, and your sister. How is she doing? She must be feeling very alone out there. Keep your head up, and make up your mind to leave the street grind behind along with doing time after your release.

Missing My Family

what I miss from my old childhood
is being with my cousin bre
who's about to go the pen'
for twelve years or less
i miss being with my cousin keke
who died right in front of my granny' house
from a car accident
i miss being on the turf
not always worrying about five-oh
and i miss my granny living on the block
and i miss everybody being real in the 'hood
that's about it
r i p my cousin keke
over here man, you gone but not forgotten

-Wally G, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You need to do some sorting through the things you miss, 'cause even if you miss the block forever, some of what goes down there you need to let go forever. How could you stay off the block, even if you wanted to, if that's where you live? Man, you're going to need to learn how to say no, and recognize that's keeping it real, not staying strapped while you slang, rob and steal.

Me

What do I plan to do for the future? Well I plan to do something for my life even though I am in the situation I'm in right now.

I decided my choice of career would be some line of working with kids. I think I want to be in the line of working for kids and poor people probably a child welfare worker or open up a foster care home because I don't think it's fair that kids grow up the way they are today, all these emotions and things they hold inside and now we murderers and rapists.

So why not just help them before they get to that stage or drugs, and why not help them while they're young and give them extra support, or maybe be in career for the homeless.

I figure why must people starve in the world? We need to study havin' money to give out and they give it to the people that already have it like Jeopardy, Wheel-A- Fortune, Lotto, Who Wants To Be A Millionaire and when we have all these people starving and dying, answer that question. The world won't because the world's unhealthy now-a-days that's why we don't have a healthy population.

I would help these people before they get to these stages of being depressed and then doing drugs being raped or hurt or raped to being rapists, and child abusers. Why not help them change?

-Dominique, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, you're asking so many important questions here, it's obvious that you're a thoughtful and intelligent person with a lot on her mind. You're just the kind of person the community needs on its side, and we hope that you do take control of your own life so that you can reach out and help others. The first thing to do is to confront your own hardships. What is a smart lady like you doing in juvie? We know that with so much heart you can move on to something more positive. Good luck.

Ready To Leave

Hey Beat, this be your boy at Camp. I been here about five months, and I'm ready to leave — but I probably got about two months or something.

For all the people that's coming to Camp, don't run. It's too easy here! All you have to do is just stick to yourself and keep your mouth shut. Some of the staff here are hella cool, and some you just have to stay away from.

-Mien, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for the straight advice about how to get through Camp successfully. Those are the fundamentals: "stick to yourself and keep your mouth shut." Volunteering for sports and work programs helps pass the time, too, and keeps you out of trouble (and down the road can get you extra home visit time).

rest in peace

rest in peace my ninjas
i miss y'all to the fullest
you know where we be
i know y'all lookin' down on me
but i keep y'all close to me every step
and nothing gon' get in my way
but let's keep it real
it's hella different out in the real world
without my ninjas
but it's cool
y'all keep it real around the turf
y'all ain't going nowhere
i believe y'all there with me and the ninjas
out trying to survive out here
but y'all keep us safe
'cause y'all on the look out for us
and watching our back like we had y'all's
i miss all you ninjas
i'm out beat
r i p fallen ninjas, love y'all

-Rickybo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah it's different with your loved ones living behind your eyes in your mind and heart instead of in front of them on the block. And yeah they're up in heaven watching over you (according to those who believe in a merciful and forgiving God). But you need to understand that the part that gets to heaven is the soul that lived in them, and what's more, now that they're in heaven they're eyes are open to God's truth which they only saw through the twisted lens of fear (you call it "survival") that allowed them to feel love for you and yours even if they didn't always know what was best for you (or themselves). Now when they visit you in dreams or meditation, if you let them, they'll give you better advice than they ever could when they were trapped in the street life, because they still love you but now they can speak God's truth fearlessly. That doesn't mean they don't fear for you and want to see you live differently from them so you can enjoy a different fate — and that goes for your homies still living and breathing in the pen' if their love is real.

Two Hours To Show My Mom Some Love

If I had two hours of freedom, I'd go to my mom's house to tell her how much I love her and how lucky I am to have someone that cares as much for me as she does. I would show my mother how much respect for her as well as for myself I've gained since I was first locked up. Also I'd tell her how truly sorry I am to have her stressin' about me like that. I love my mother and hope I get out soon to show her some love.

-Mareel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It does sound as if you've come to your senses since you were first locked up, and even if there's some pain with that experience, it's the road to recovery, beginning just as you say, with a healthy respect for those who've shown you love and for yourself as well. We hope after your release that you stay this clear-headed and open-hearted, and that you make decisions that support the new you.

Two Hours Of Freedom, Two Hours With My Girls

If I was given two hours of freedom, I would spend that time in the hospital watching my baby girl be born. I'm expecting my girlfriend to give birth to my baby in seven days and I would want nothing more then to see my girl be born.

It would be hard for me not to run, but that would just give me more time and I want to be out and free so I can be there for both my girl and my baby girl.

Now that I have a child on the way, I've really realized that I need to change my ways so I can be a good role model for my kid and help her make the right choices so she doesn't end up in my position.

Well, good luck to all who have court and keep your head up.

I'm sorry daddy can't be there to see you be born, but I'll be home soon. I love you Valentina.

-Lil' Smoke, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wish you could be home for that too. Could you write a longer letter to your daughter, for the pages of The Beat - welcoming her to the world and sharing all of your dreams and wishes for her? And someday you could show her what she means to you, even when you were away from her for this short time.

To You Know Who

You say you love me
And I love you too
But you play all these head games
I just can't trust you!

You hurt me once,
And you hurt me twice
You never listen
Or take my advice.

Some days I'll get angry
Like how could you do this to me?
Then I think, "nah, you're not worth it."
And this looks like strike three!

Other days I get lonely
And just sit there and cry
Like why did I believe
That you were just my guy?

You said that you loved me
And I loved you too
But you hurt me for the last time!
'Cause ninja we're through!

-Ney, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! This is a great poem! We love how you built up the tension until the last line. Wonderful work.

I want to be out and free so I can be there for both my girl and my baby girl

All These Things

What makes my smile disappear
...is when someone in my family is hurt.
...when my mother cries,
...when I'm locked up.

All of these things make my smile disappear.

-Hb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This little piece has all the heartbreak and poignancy of a poem. Knowing that the pain of your loved ones hurts is a great way to remember just how much those loved ones mean to you. It sounds like through all the pain you have people who care about you, and who you care about. That's something money can't buy and jail can't take away. Peace

happy in my mind

my happy place is my mind
i can't be distracted from my mind
when i'm there and it's a fun place
i be having fun there in my own world
i be putting everybody out
just focusing in my mind
just thinking about hella fun stuff
that i used to do but the most fun
is when i be dreaming about
i'm in movies and stuff like that
it's good where i be at in my mind
but i be going crazy in there too

-Young Rickybo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We respect your mental power to find happiness within, though you probably need to weed out some of what you used to do, for your own sake, and let the mental flowers blossom without the weeds that choke out the good stuff. Some of the going crazy is from those weeds and some from where they led you to — here.

My Mother

Woke up this morning and I wondered why?
Why am I'm here?

My mother is why I'm here.

She lied and told the police that I hit her
now I'm waiting to be charged with battery against my mother!

Hell yeah they gone believe her.

She is an adult.

If she wins, I swear man.

I am not gone say that I'm gone give up but I just might want to.

I wish the judge would take the time to get to know me and see that I'm as violent as a turtle.

Well I guess I got to see.

Anyways I'm looking forward to seeing my girl and getting out.

I'm doing all I can, making phone calls and all.

-Sikora, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wish that judges could take the time to get to know each individual whose lives they are to decide on. Wouldn't things be so much different? Would jail even exist if the circumstances of each crime were understood. Maybe, but we bet those jails would be a lot less full.



You

Did you love me, did you lie to me?
 Why do promise that you wouldn't leave me
 if you knew you were going to cheat on me then why didn't you just leave me.
 Now that you left me
 it seems like I have nothing left inside me
 the day you left
 it was like my heart left my soul.

-Pebbles, 150 Crew

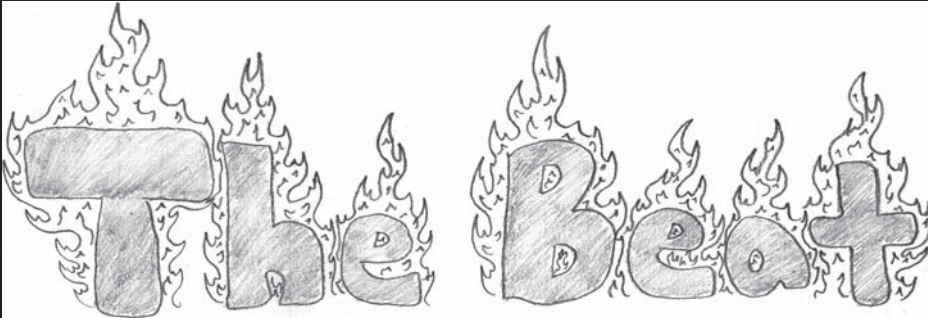
From The Beat: This is a lovely poem. The repeating image of the person leaving is really effective. Nice work. Now move on from this fool and find someone who will treat you right.

I Miss...

What I miss a lot is my friend Andrew P.
 He got killed in Oakland and I miss him a lot.
 We did everything together that was my boy and because of that I promise
 when I get out I'm never comin' back. And I'm go change my life
 I love you Drew! RIP Drew.

-Lil' Clayton, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What do you need to do to keep that promise to yourself? We also want you to stay free. Tell us your plans, we are all ears!



Free To Be With My Family

If I had to choose what to do with two hours of freedom, I would choose to spend my time with all my family members: my mother, my father, my baby sister, my auntie, my uncle and my two little cousins, Jhimmy Lee and Catherine. Just to be with them, I would do anything to be with them again!

I would spend family time either at a family dinner or at church. Of those two, church would be my preference, because only the lord can guide me while I'm in here. I'd be really grateful to spend two hours at church on a Sunday morning, praying with my family, for my family to have a long stress-free life. And if the Lord could bless me with a release on EM (electric monitor) or home supervision — I'd do anything to be home with my family.

-Lawrence, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say you'd do anything, but what the Lord is asking you to do is to change your life. Use this time to meditate on what you can change in your life that will help keep you out of trouble, living at home with your family, and staying free, after your release whenever it comes. What do you need to do, or do better, that you weren't doing before? What do you need to do less often, or stop altogether, that you were doing before? Perhaps you should be asking God in your prayers, then meditate in silence, listening for that quiet voice or voiceless thought that brings you God's answer.

Missin' My Grandma

what i miss the most of my childhood
 is my grandma
 i remember she called my name
 to come in the house
 so grandma, i love you
 and i'm coming soon
 i love you, grandma, r i p

-Walter, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Amazing how memories of the simplest things, like the voice of your grandmother calling you into the house, take on the greatest meaning for our grieving hearts.

I would spend family time either
 -at-a-family-dinner-or-at-church-Of
 those two, church would be my
 preference, because only the lord
 can guide me while I'm in here.

Grandma's Home

my happy place was home
 with my grandma
 but she died
 when i was twelve
 and we sold the house

-Walter, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Put this with your other little poem, and you have anyone who's lost a house and the loved one who made it into a home, dropping tears for those remembered years.

Odd Adventure

I love my luck.
 I love the snow.
 My wrist hurts
 when the rain pours.
 I fell asleep
 in a dusty creek bed
 and complained
 about my skin.
 I wanted to wash,
 but there was no time.

-B, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is an odd adventure. Where is that dusty creek bed? Maybe you're still

Drowning

I love the moon
 like I love the beauty of your smile.
 I drown in this misery
 just thinking of you.
 Pain is what I have.
 Desire is what I want.
 Every night I call your name.

-Diego, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Wow! You hit it this time. Nice writing. Tell us more about this special person and how you are working on overcoming the pain/sadness you feel.

What Is Something That Is Stabbing You In Heart?

The thing that is stabbing me in the heart is that the person that I was with and I cared about took me for granted. Just abused me really bad. I felt like he has stabbed a knife into my heart, just killed my feelings. He didn't even care about the way I was feeling. Not playing the "game" right. Until this day I reminisce about all the things he done did to me and it's just heartache.

-Pebbles, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so hard when even though you know someone isn't good for you, you can't stop feeling those feelings. Over time though, through loving and taking care of yourself, you'll realize that you're too good to waste yourself on someone who treats you badly.

Special Time

a special time in my life
 thinking i'm married and got a wife
 i was acting scary
 even though this a special night
 first time out in nine months
 thought about what's special
 and what i really want
 or maybe it's a dream going through my dome
 my head spinning while i'm thinking
 about this special girl
 maybe i was tripping because i
 wanted her badly in my world
 i thought it was special until i woke up
 out of a dream, looking around, left on stuck
 maybe this was a special time i went through
 and maybe the next time i'll
 continue all the way through

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ah, it was all a dream of love's power, the desire to claim as your own a beautiful flower. We wonder if she left you first, and that's what woke you up like a bubble's burst. Or perhaps you left her to serve your time, and that counts too is the penalty for crime — a crime against love that a thug on the grind never has enough before he's caught up doing time. Quit, go legit, and see what love makes of it.

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom, I would spend time with my family, 'cause you can always spend time with your friends. So I would go out to eat, do something special with my mom and my sister.

I wouldn't try to run, because you gon' get caught sooner or later. They gon' send you even further away (like to L.A. or R.O.P.), where your family can't even visit you. So I will come back and finish my time, because they can't keep you forever.

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They can't keep your forever this time, but don't go back to the same high-risk stakes in the game and get caught up for another crime — 'cause sometimes you get caught in the middle of a murder play, and then they never have to let you see the light of day. It sounds like you're seeing things pretty clear though. Keep that frame of mind and you'll get that release sooner than later!

i thought it was special
 until i woke up
 out of a dream, looking around,
 left on stuck

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom, I would go visit my mom at the cemetery and go visit my brother in prison.

I wouldn't try to run, because it wouldn't be worth it. You will get caught sooner or later.

I would also go visit my baby'momma. I would hella cupcake, and do my thang. Well, that's what I would do, if I really had the chance.

-Lil' Soldier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're growing in wisdom, and that's what it takes to beat the system. Accept reality for what it is. Then cherish the best and deal with the rest.

The King Of Poetry

everybody say they better then me
 but what they really don't know is
 i'm the king of poetry
 so try to stop me
 even though i'm unstoppable
 my poems 'cause tears in your eyes
 and make your whole body fold
 yes, i'm the king who writes a lot
 i got competitors and i won't stop
 my poems going straight to the top
 so like hot bullets everybody else's drop
 because i swept up the floor like a mop
 stick in your head like a hand on a door that knocks
 because these words i'm saying is more then crops
 so as the king of poetry
 more than a king, like a drug dealer in the streets
 my poems can be harsh and some can be sweet
 so to let everybody know: ally bo is the king of poetry

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A drug dealer's not more than a king, though like a king he's got everyone around him hating, and like a king he can't tell love from lie, 'cause everyone around him wants a piece of his pie. But in the realm of poetry it's all transformed, and the drug being dispensed produces no harm, at least not in those who are content to be charmed by the music of the verse as much as the sense of the words. Then again, a king of poetry can take his lyrics to war, for he knows words are sharper than the point of a sword, and verse speeds faster than a bullet leaves the chamber — a gun can stop a woman's heart, but a poem can claim her.

My Happy Place

my happy place is at home
 where i can sit back and relax
 i can go home when i want
 without nobody saying "go to bed"
 without me having to ask
 to use the bathroom when i want
 at home i can sit back watch t v
 and listen to the radio when i want
 so my happy place is at home
 — with my family

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Right on! And you'll be back home before too long. But now the key, is to make sure after your release that you think and act responsibly 'cause that's what you need to do to stay free — and being home and staying free is what you most want to be!

My Happy Place

What it do Beat, this the homie Soldier. Well, let me just say that my happy place is really a happy place. The place I'm talking about is at my baby'momma's grandma's house. Her house is where I feel comfortable at the most.

It feels like my home. I can really relax there like nowhere else. I feel comfortable enough to go in the refrigerator and get what I want. This place is very quiet. It does get loud at times, but mostly it's quiet. There is music in the background sometimes, when we're like cooking or something.

I go to this happy place every weekend on my home visits. What makes it a real happy place is that I'm there with my lady! That's what makes it my happy place!

-Lil' Soldier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's all sounds happy indeed, a place full of love and family, where you're as comfortable as a clam can be. Now what you need to do, is make sure when your Camp program is through, you stop acting like a fool in the street, so you can stay with your little loving family — and stay free!

Friend Or Enemy

An enemy is a person who does something that has affected you for the worse, or just that you don't like what the person has done to you. I can tell whether an enemy is a enemy, because the person probably did something to me, like hurt me or do something mean to me, play me for my life, bring me down — or it's a person I can't trust, or a person I can't talk to, a person you can't sit by, or a person who does things to offend you.

A friend is a person you can trust, depend on, and mutually be there for each other. I can tell whether a friend is a friend, because the person helps me and is there for me when I need him or her the most. A friend will tell me right from wrong and will love me for who I am. A friend is supportive when you're down or when something happens to you that should not happen to a kid or adult. A friend should always tell you the right thing to do, but most of all — understand what a friend is going through.

-Stella, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel you on the what characterizes a friend, 'cause you got that all right! On the others side though, allow from some gray area between a friend and enemy. Everyone who is not your friend is not necessarily your enemy. You're right to realize that you can't trust just anybody or everybody, but that doesn't make them automatically your enemy. It might be a stranger (don't put too much trust in a stranger), who as you get to know each other little by little, becomes a friend — or not, but not necessarily an enemy either. Also you can not like someone without seeing that person as an enemy, just someone you don't want to spend much time with.

Taking The Other's Point Of View

Hi, my name is Errica, and I have a girlfriend named Stella, who hurt me — but I can truly say that I deserved it. Because I swept her feet! And I know Stella is superstitious about people sweeping her off feet, but she still should not have hit me. Because she told me she loved me!

Me and Stella have a great relationship on the whole. It's just that I do some things to make her mad. And I kinda hit on her, but she don't hit me back. Me, Errica, with my sign being Pisces and me being bi-polar, I might need to explain that I do still love her even though I cheated on her!

But now, I can't let her know that I'm cheating because if she finds out, she's not going to be with me anymore. I know because I cheated on her before and she gave me one more chance. But every time I see a boy I think is cute, I can't keep my eyes off him, even though I have a girlfriend already that loves me.

-Stella, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whew! This piece goes pretty deep, written by Stella from Errica's point of view! Errica admits she's bi-polar but doesn't say anything about the confusion being self-evidently bi-sexual introduces into her life. In a way, it's no different than when a strictly straight person cheats, and in a way it's different. If nothing else, there's the outside social pressure to conform to a heterosexual normative standard in the everyday (prejudiced) world. And even if such prejudice should be confronted and unmasked, some are less willing than others to pay the price (which varies greatly with context) of such a forthright choice. Perhaps Stella is much clearer about her gender preference (romantically speaking), or is she simply more courageous? What would Errica say, in Stella's opinion?

*The Beat
With Stella*

Cheating, Part Eight

Tmac: Ninja, what the hell was all of that about?

JT: Ninja, it is a long story.

NaNa: I'll beat that girl' butt.

JT: Y'all just calm the hell down.

Tmac: It's good, brah.

JT: So what's good for tonight?

NaNa: Well, we was thinking we could go to the club for the night and then

come back to your house for a smoke out.

JT: Let's do it then.

Tmac: Ninja, this club is poppin' tonight!

JT: Hell yuh!

NaNa: Let's go y'all. They are gonna be at your house at eleven.

JT: Come on, let's go then.

Tmac: What's up y'all.

Rell: What's up, y'all?

JT: Let's get this smoke out started. Y'all got the drank?

Von: Yup.

Bob: Ninja, I'm hella high.

JT: Shhh, shut up! You heard that?

Rell: Ninja, you trippin'!

Tmac: No he not. Look at that.

JT: What the hell is they doin'?

Rell: I don't know.

JT: Aw hell no! It's on.

[To be continued.]

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hmm, now don't lead us down the garden path. 'Cause even if you are nostalgic for a "smoke out" and such, our readers don't need to hear any "war stories" to get their addictions raging. Remember that you're not even writing for the general public, you are writing for juvenile detainees. So if you don't have a point to make, some wisdom to share, our readers don't need any help in messing up their thinking, 'cause their thinking got them here. You feel? Well, your next installment will tell.

A friend is a person you can trust,
depend on, and mutually be there for each

Cheating, Part Seven

Girl: Stop it!

JT: Shut yo' stupid self up!

Tmac: JT, hold this ninja up!

JT: Fuhgit that ninja, cousin; let him go. And you get the hell out my house!

Girl: You didn't have to hit him!

JT: So now you takin' up for the ninja?

Girl: Whatever.

Tmac: You heard my patna, get out!

Girl: You don't even know me like that, so you need to shut the hell up.

Tmac: I don't know who you think you' talking to. Betta watch yo' mouth.

Girl: Whatever, ninja.

Tmac: Baby, get up out the car and beat this girl butt.

NaNa: Bee, you got my ninja messed up!

JT: Y'all all be cool. NaNa, go in the house. Tmac, you too. And you two get the hell out'a here now.

Girl: But baby...

JT: Girl, please. [And before she could say another word the door was slammed in her face.]

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You do paint a realistic portrait of this sort of scene where violence is always just about to pop off. And we appreciate that despite your (JT's) anger and disappointment, you do calm the situation, requiring only that the source of the problem leave your house.

What Is Something That Is Stabbing You In The Heart

Well yes there has been something stabbing me. Well my probation officer will not let me go live with my mom and they are going to send me to my dad's house and I think that they are stabbing me in my back but I ain't trippin'. I'm just go' do my year of probation and get it over with because I can't keep running and then get sent to somewhere else!

I woke up this morning wondering if my P-O was going to come see me? I was wondering what was going to happen on October 6? Was I going to get out? What is my bookies address, I have a lot to tell them.

-Jillian

From The Beat: You start out with the right idea, following through on your year of probation instead of keeping the cycle going. What's this about your bookie though? We hope whatever you have to tell them is all about how you're changing your lifestyle and not throwing money away through this bookie.

From The Beat Readers

Greetings Beat and Beat Readers! This that home girl Vianca from Hayward, I'm just checking in with y'all. I've been here for two weeks, nothing I can't handle though. I should be up out here by the end of the week or early next week (today's date Oct. 3, 2006).

I want to complete my program but whatever happens, happens.

Also, my birthday is coming soon, Oct. 20, 2006. I'll be sixteen years old. I can't remember the last time I had a party with cake and ice cream, not even a sincere happy birthday. Maybe this year will be different, maybe not.

-Juicy

From The Beat: Well happy birthday! We hope being sixteen brings good things too. Sometimes a birthday can be a good time to reassess one's life and make plans for the next year, kind of like your own personal new year's resolution. We hope you complete your program! You're the only one who can make it work for you.

Woke Up This Morning Still Waiting For That Group Home

Well, I was thinking I was going to be able to go to the group home today, but it did not come through 'cause I'm still here in juvenile hall waiting for that group home to come here because I know I have been here for three months now.

Other people get to leave before me and that make me mad because I miss being with my sisters and my brothers and my mother because I can not have to be here up in this juvenile hall.

I need to stop coming here so that I do not have to go to group homes and stop runnin' away from the group home that they send me to too.

-Baby Gurl

From The Beat: Not running from the group home is a really good place to start if you want this to be your last visit to the halls. We know your probation or sentence always seems like forever, but you only keep the cycle going when you run. They will eventually find you (like they always do) and you'll be back where you started, where you swore you'd never come back to. SO, if you have a problem with the group home or how probation is going, handle it with maturity, call your PO, call your lawyer too and let them know what's up. By you calling these professionals you will have it documented that there is a problem with the group home and or probation, and hopefully these professionals will act accordingly. All the best to you!

RIP Trell

Rest in peace Trell. You will always be remembered. You was a real ninja. I don't know how you got killed but you still live in my memories.

I remember when we was driving around in that Chevelle, smoking and drinking but in a flash of light you gone.

All the boys miss you, but we love you and will see you soon bra.

-Boy

From The Beat: It's so painful when people disappear from our lives quickly, especially in a violent way. Thank you for sharing your memory with The Beat.

Life Is Messed Up

My life is effed up because I keep coming back here. This shhh is making me mad because my eighteenth birthday is coming up, but that shhh don't mean nothing because I know I'm going to be out of this shhh and go back home and get my money back you feel me, so do what you got to do I'm out.

-Dee

From The Beat: We hope whatever you do to get your money back doesn't land you in the hall again. We assume it will, 'cause how you write this, makes us think you are simply sticking to negative living.

Court Tommorrow

What's up Beat? I've got court tomorrow morning. Hopefully they let yo' boy go on EM. I been in here for one month now. It's 'bout that time to get out and get it again. I'm gone pimp 'em 'cause you know I ain't got nothing but time to stay in the house.

-Lil' Bow

From The Beat: We hope you get out and do what you need to do. EM is better than the halls so remember that when temptation sneaks up on you.

Thinking

I woke up this morning thanking God that He let me live another day, even though waking up in jail is not what I want.

I wake up thinking, I wonder what my family is doing and if they are ok. Are they thinking about me? I wake up with so much on my mind. I miss my family and I hope to be with them soon.

-Margarita

From The Beat: It's never easy to be away from loved ones, but to be away and locked up, that must be the hardest. So many of The Beat writers express this same kind of sadness, but still keep coming back to the halls. Do you think things will be different for you? Will the love for your family help you to stay strong once you get out?

My Girl

My girl got arrested on a false charge. She over 18 now, so she in the big house. Now she's one of the solidest girls I know and she is some stuck somewhere for a period of her life for some B-S.

-Homegirl

From The Beat: We're really sorry to hear about your friend, but we hope that you choose to learn something from her misfortune. What can you do to make sure that you're never put in a place where you might be accused for a crime you didn't commit. There are different paths you could choose to take that would lead you away from such dangers.

Two Hours Of Family And Friends

If I had two hours of freedom I would go spend time with my family and friends and have a good dinner and conversation with them. And tell them I'm sorry for putting y'all in this situation.

I will let mom and my grandma know that I love them very much and tell them to stay in prayer 'cause God is going to work it out.

I would also put time to the side for God and ask him to forgive me for my sins and tell him to help me through the struggle and watch over me.

I wouldn't try to run because I know I'm not going to be in here for that long.

-Rodnelle

From The Beat: The lucky thing is while locked up you have plenty of time to plan how to share your feelings with your family and succeed back home. Use this time well, even though we know it sucks to be there - turn it into something you can use later to improve your life.

Respect It, Or Expect It

Yeah, man, this ya boy D — and I'm just hella mad 'cause I got kicked out of Camp over some bull. But I don't care, 'cause tomorrow I go to court and hopefully I get back to Camp as soon as possible so I can get to my home passes and spend time with my family — and get with my squad.

Man, I been locked up since May! Man, ain't even had a laugh with my squad, ain't had a kiss from my wifey, ain't even had any good home cooking with my family. Man, I been locked up for a minute! Now I need to get out on the streets! Man, I know my squad funkign tough. Man, so you know I gotta get down.

Man, my squad brah locked up, man, for a minute, man. He really went dummy that night, man. I wrote him and said, "Hold it down for the squad. Let everybody know what it is!" For the rest of my squad, keep it solid twenty-four/seven, get money, get girls and live the life. That's my life style, respect it or expect it.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: Sometimes it's like all that street jingo you spit is just a form of self-hypnosis, 'cause what you can expect from living the life style you write about here, is to spend years behind bars. If you really don't like being locked up, then admit the truth at least to yourself. Get down with the funk in the street and get played for a punk and sent to a penitentiary. It's not like when you were a little guy playing a game, the reality of funk in the street is just plain insane. If you want to get money and keep it, you've got to come up with a positive plan and achieve it.

Immortal Question

It is time for these young people to start to get in with God. They're dying left and right. God is our only savior in this world. If you don't believe in God it's time to worship God. At the end dude, do you want to live with God or the devil?

-Nu Nu

From The Beat: The question of believing in God and choosing good over evil is one of the oldest human questions or struggles. Where do you get your belief and faith? AS for pushing others to find God, remember, nobody likes to be told that it's time to do this or that, but in the end, we make our choices, if we support it or not.

Two Hours Of Family And Beyond

If I had two hours of freedom I would go to my family's house, spend the two hours with them. Then when it's time to go back and when they go to my house lookin' for me I won't be there. I would be goin' to another city or somethin', stay low for like about two to three weeks and then hit the streets with my potnas and whopping on people and takin' they money you feel me bra.

Also sometimes I will visit my family that's what I will do.

-Rodolpo

From The Beat: We understand that the idea of two hours of freedom just invites you to run. We hope you wouldn't though - since it will only increase the number of days you have to spend locked up in the long run. They always find folks who run, especially young fools who commit violent crimes.

Violating My Two Hours Of Freedom

Two hours of freedom. If I had two-hours of freedom, I would run. Probably go to another city or go to my aunt's. After that I would go to my lady's house. Then leave to go kick it with the homies. Then go home to my mom's house and spend some time with my mom. Then go to my cousin's house. Then go stay with my cousin for the rest of the day. Go eat a supreme burrito.

-Michael

From The Beat: You do all this on the run, guess what, you'll have a warrant out for your arrest and it's only a matter of time before you are back in custody, hopefully without any new charges. We think you should enjoy the tease of two hours, go back and do all the things you mentioned in this piece when you are officially free!

All Eyes On Me

People look at me like a monster because I got dreads, and I'm black. But they just don't know that it's a good heart in everybody.

Now that I'm really locked up and when I try to get a job and they go look on my background and think that I'm a monster because all the shhh I did. But I'm still a good person in the inside.

-Baby BI

From The Beat: We bet you're a good person inside. And you can make the choice never to do the things that bring you here again that make you feel like a

RIP J-5

Bra, how are you doing up there?
Bra I really miss you.
We all wish you were still here bra.
We still get into it too.
My ninja guy got in to it man.
How is everything been?
Cool bra. I'm gonna get out soon.

-Kid

From The Beat: Why do you get into it with that other crew? Do you think your friend J-5 wants you to stay part of this cycle of violence? Or does he want you to taste true freedom before you follow him into death or deeper incarceration?

I'd Do Lots of Things in Two Hours!

If I were given two hours of freedom, I would go to my friend's house, and go kick it, and have fun. I'd thank my parents, and then go see my sister's baby in Vallejo. I would not do drugs, because I don't want to go back to that!

I'd go see everybody from the spot. Then I'd go see my boyfriend, and then go to church. I'd just do lots of things — smoke cigarettes, go to the park, hang out with my parents, go make some money, go see my step-mom, Kitty, and thank her for everything she's done for me ('cause she saved my life, really!). And I'd go to school. And I'd get a job.

-Angelina

From The Beat: We applaud most of your decisions here, but we wonder about the wisdom of going to the spot if you don't want to go back to doing drugs. (Those in recovery from drug addiction advise: "You don't to go a barber shop if you don't want a haircut." So why go to the spot if you want to stay away from doing drugs?) Also, since you don't have a job right now, we wonder how you plan to "go make some money".

Family And Friends

Family will always be there for you. So will your friends, if they're good friends that are like family. I think that I have good friends, because they have been there for me in my worst situation ever. So has my family. Now it's time for me to return the favor to my family and friends.

'Till next time, it's your crazy uncle, Fairlas.

-Fairlas

From The Beat: Yes, but you need to remember that doing what someone asks of you, is not always doing them a favor, especially if your friends are gangsters and what they're asking will only get them and you deeper into not only the game but the system, too. You feel? Use your head, then keep it real — or it may look like love, but it really isn't.

My Wishes

This is Doug aka Lil' Brah. Man, if I had three wishes, what would I wish for? I think my first wish would be for me to go to North Carolina, paid for.

My second wish would be for me to have all the money I need whenever I need it. My next wish would be for my mom to live to see me be the man she wants me to be. My next wish would be for me to never be involved with the law in a negative way ever again. Next I would wish for a black on black Bentley coupe on twenty-two's.

Next I would wish for my whole family to have a twelve-bedroom house, with their own car, of their choice. I would wish for my family to stay safe in whatever they do. Then I would wish for my lil' cousins to have their college education paid for, in advance. I would wish for my squad to ride around the hood on deuces and have nobody hating on them.

Then, I don't know, because I got too many wishes left! So I would keep my Jennie for my whole life!

-Doug

From The Beat: Just for the record, a Bentley is all status. It's not like it runs better than a Lexus or Mercedes or Audi or BMW or Volvo even. We'd say when you wish to be with Jennie forever, when you wish your squad could ride around with nobody hating (for which, of course, they'd have to be out of the game, which is all hate), when you wish never to be involved with breaking the law or its consequences, when you wish for your mom to see you be a successful, responsible, family man, and when you wish for you family to live comfortably and for your little cousins to get a free ride through college — man, those aren't just look-good but the real goods of life, most of which you can get with a regular job and a regular life. So change out the game while you still can, man.

What I Miss The Most From My Early Childhood

I have and had a good childhood and have a lot of things I miss, but one of the things is one Christmas I got a brand new mountain bike. The same day I had a great Christmas dinner with my family.

-Jason

From The Beat: What an awesome Christmas gift! We're glad you have great memories to think about while you complete your time in the hall.

my happy place

being free and being able to do what i want and not being told when i can go to the bathroom and eat, piss, and dookie i wanna have my own freedom in my own hands 'cause when you in jail staff and the judge got your freedom in they' hands

-Lavaeada

From The Beat: Your imagery is a bit on the vulgar side, so we toned it down, to be reproduced on the printed page, but you have a point. Now what are you willing to change in your life to insure that when you walk out of this place you'll walk to stay happy, joyous and free?

Lil' J to CYA

what's up beat this lil' j i'm goin to c y a 'cause judge was on some wrong but it's cool though 'cause he think i'm gon' mess up but i'm gon' do that thang but yeah all right then to all in here i'm out

-Lil' J

From The Beat: The desire to prove that those who misjudge you have got it all wrong, can provide a powerful motive to do right. However, anger alone will only get you so far. You have to want it for yourself too — 'cause if you don't want it, it won't happen.

Last time

Saludos Beat! This ya boy, Lil' Spooks, comin' at y'all from this so-called max' unit, chillin'. Well, this my last time writin' to The Beat Within, 'cause I'm on my way to CYA for a coo' minute.

To tell y'all the truth, I'm happy I'm leavin' this place! Juvie is like a daycare, and I don't like it. I need to be around more mature surroundings. The only thing cool about this place, is being around my homeboys here.

Well, other than that, I'm just gonna keep it solid and stand tall through it all. Well, I'm checkin' out.

-Lil' Spooks

From The Beat: Max unit can be as silly and immature as the people in it choose to make it. And no doubt it can get on your nerves at a time you most need not just to stay chill but to meditate on all the good and ill of your life and the part you play in it. Oh, and if you're still here reading this (which happens to more than a few expecting to leave on a given date and which is one of the hardest things to endure, disappointed expectation), you need to remember that you're often doing better than you're feeling. Don't set yourself up to fall, but stand tall through it all!

Lil' Chad At Camp Sweeney

What's up Beat! I'm up here with hella ninjas, trying to do my program, but this stuff get hella hard! They give a ninja a write-up for any little thing. So, you just got to be quiet. I'm already restricted.

-Lil' Chad

From The Beat: Live and learn, and you'll find your weekend time more easily earned as you go. You'll see when and where, how and who, and you won't need to guess 'cause you'll already know.

Lil' Neighborhood Superstar

What's up wit' it, Beat! This Lil' Eli again. I'm still in this G-thang (Alameda County Juvenile Hall), waitin' to get out.

I'm gonna tell you how I'm a neighborhood superstar! Yeah, I got ninjas on the outs yellin' out, "Free Lil' Eli!" The streets love me, and I love 'em back.

-Lil' Eli

From The Beat: Then it's a bad love, 'cause the streets are what put you here where you don't want to be. Home, school, maybe the athletic field or a part-time job, those things will keep you free, but the streets are part of the same "G-thang" you're locked up in.

What I Miss From My Childhood

i really miss being with my old school friends playing some basketball and playing tag around the school i really miss just being a normal kid getting in all the activities that we had around

-Lil' Chad

From The Beat: You can still get yourself involved in lots of activities. In fact, it would help keep you off the street and out of trouble. And while your at Camp, it will also make the time pass more quickly. But life will never be a simple as when you were just a youngster whose job was to play and have fun.

Free Wit' My Family, My Girl and My Folks

If I had two hours of freedom, man, I'd go wit' my family, my girlfriend, and my real folks, and I'd just do as many things as possible.

I would first want my alone time wit' my lady. I got a lot of stuff on my mind I need to talk 'bout — and some stress I need to let off! Then I'd spend the rest of my time wit' my family and folks, chop it up see how everyone is doin' and see what's crackin' in the 'hood. Then I'd give my hugs and kisses to the family, and then my love to the homies.

I'd pull a county move and put me and my lady on room time for the rest of my time! Then I'd return to the hall wit' a smile on my face, and wit' all my stress gone, I'd go to my county room and go to sleep. That would be my two hours of freedom. But there's no point in fairy tales, so I'm'a leave it at that and hope you liked my lil' imaginary fantasy.

-Gangsta

From The Beat: It sounds like a cool little trip. We don't know if you're headed to Camp, but if so, in a few weeks you'll get a day pass, which will give you more than two hours, but just as in your fantasy here, you'll be asked to show the will power to return on time — so you can get another home visit; eventually for a whole weekend. If you're being placed elsewhere, oh well, consider this just one more imaginary trip through fantasyland.

Two Hours Out

If I had two hours of freedom, I would not go to sleep. I'd do everything I could, like go to my girl' house. And I'd spend time with my mom, for twenty minutes, and then with my friends for ten min'. Then I'd go to back to my girl' house!

-Brandon

From The Beat: Hey, that's funny the way you go back to your girl's house again! Lots of pieces had the same ideas, but you're the only one who went back to his girl's house again at the end.

Two Hours

If I had two hours of freedom, I would go to my wifey's house and cupcake wit' her for about forty-five min's. Then after that, I would take my mom somewhere very special.

-Mama's Boy

From The Beat: You need to do something special for your girl, too, or she'll just feel used. You're fortunate to have the love of two women in your life, but nothing beats a mother's love.

RIP Andrew P.

Sometimes I wonder why my friends have to go through pain or die. One of my best friends got killed, and I was supposed to be there with him but I couldn't come.

-Friend

From The Beat: Seems like a lot of deaths right now are accidents of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, around the wrong people. We recommend: stay off the corner! Stay home where it's safe. As for you being there, no you weren't 'cause if you were, you would have been there and not wherever you were. Be grateful you were not, and now in Andrew's name you have a choice to live a healthy, happy life.

Your Happy Place

My happy place is in my room. I come in and out as I please, and I can do what I want when I want. I have hella fun in my room! It's like a club in my room. That's where it goes down. Everybody know that's where it is! You know it, man!

I'm tellin' everybody to come through, and people just don't know, you can have all the girls in that thang, and all the weed, the bottles, we be on in that thang. So when you get a chance, stop through. And meet me at the honeycomb hideout. It's going down! Females going stupid and actin' nutty! I'll blow grape with you, but I'm not ya buddy.

-Ally Bo

From The Beat: It sounds like one day, you might want to run a club, and for sure you'd make money off every man who calls you buddy. Nah, we don't see you as an entrepreneur pushing drink, drugs and sex, to whatever thugs walk in next. But if you're not getting paid, why would you want all that trouble to stay in your room. Oh no, you were running a club without a license! And now that you're locked up, you see what the price is! Leave that business for j-cats to pursue, and raise your sights higher than criminal pursuits. You've got too much going for you to be caught blowing smoke in your room. Well, write again soon!

From My Childhood

i miss not being sober
i miss my potnah
peanut
who's gone
i miss everybody
From Camp

-S

From The Beat: Kids don't need to consume chemicals to get high (and neither do adults, but it's especially true of children). If you were truly drunk all the time, it was a crime against your childhood, even if at the time you thought it was all good.

Free to Be With Family

if i was given two hours of freedom
i would go to my house
and spend time wit' my family
wit' my mom and dad, my lil' sister
i would also go to see both of my brothers
one in santa rita and one lives in hayward
i would also go to the church and get blessed

-Barty

From The Beat: Your heart is in the right place with every stop you make on your two-hour pass, showing love to family and thanking God for the love in your life which is a blessing. Now show God that you're ready to do right 'cause you've learned your lesson.

What I Miss

what i miss the most
from my early childhood
is getting high
smoking from sunrise to sunset

-Karlitos

From The Beat: If this is the truth, then you truly got cheated out of your childhood, even if at the time you thought it was all good. And no diss, but look — it got you all this!

Taking Care Of Myself In Two Hours.

If I had two hours of freedom I would get a makeover for my self. Get my clothes from my "patna". Go see my family and friends. I would get some money and get in touch with everybody.

-Pebbles

From The Beat: Hmmm...we wonder about where you would get your money from. Hopefully from somewhere legal... As for the makeover, well we hope you will be feeling marvelous!

Praying Is My Happy Place

Well since I'm locked up my happy place is praying, talking to god and just reading the bible. Also when I think of the good times I spent with my family and friends on the outs.

-Margarita

From The Beat: Those sound like good happy places to have right now.

Miss The Most

What I miss the most from my early childhood, is my mother. I haven't seen her in about three years. That's who I miss the most. I think about her all the time and how she used to take me places and we just used to have a lot of fun together. I can't wait until she comes home, so I can show her how her little boy has grown up!

-Big Sterl

From The Beat: Your heart's in the right place, and your mother will be fortunate to be met with such love when she comes back home — that is, if you're home again to receive her. Don't just show her that her little boy has grown — show her that he has grown wise and knows how to stay free on the outside by doing right, day and night.

Two Hours With My Family

if i was given two hours of freedom
i would spend time with my family
i would go out to take them to their favorite restaurant
and go to the place they like to stay at

-Victor

From The Beat: That's very cool. So, before you got locked up, were you doing things with your family, or just your friends?

Dealing With Life

Well, life is kinda crazy, because when I'm just chillin', minding my own business, I'm still dealing with life, trying to dodge this fake ninja before I end up doing something I will regret.

So, I'm'a just stay chill and wait till I go home on these visits. Twan'll just pimp it out and stay out of bullshhh

-Twan

From The Beat: Staying chill is a major skill, both on the outs and here at Camp, maybe even more so at Camp, where all these folks are bunched together, many of whom don't know the difference between trouble and fun but will do whatever to break the boredom.

When I Get Out Of Here

When I get out of here I am going to see my babygirl because she cares about a ninja so when I get out I got to make it up to her, you feel, me she is going to love a ninja when I finish with her you feel me I am going to make love to her as soon as I get out.

-Dee

From The Beat: That's very romantic, but we hope you realize that you need to do more than make love to this young woman to make up for your absence from her life while you were locked up.

Your Happy Place

I would go to Redwood City to the block, to kick it with the homeboys, and some females.

-Pelukas

From The Beat: If knocks get addicted to drugs, thugs get addicted to the spot. When you realize it's part of what keeps you locked up, maybe you'll also know it's time to stop.

"Wifey"

my wifey is too solid for these dirty bops
when i come home she got the cream of the crop
these dudes looking for love in all the wrong places
while me and wifey sharing ecstatic faces
now take two — it's to me and her while
these females all in my face wanting a piece of my pie
i'm in a park wit' a dime
my wifey go hard — ten stars and up

-P-Stank

From The Beat: We're sure you're happy with your girlfriend (aka "wifey"), but why do you need to show disrespect to other girls (young women) in order to praise yours? It's not just sexist, it's the kind of talk that leads to laying hands on, if not yours then the next man's. Stop running down the opposite sex.

My Girl Makes Me Happy

My happy place? You know, me & my girl kicking it together! She is cool 'cause we can talk. I can tell her anything, and she is always there when I need her.

When I go to jail or when I'm sad or mad, she is the only person that can make me happy and feel a lot better. And she gives me with advice that I would never dream of doing if she had not suggested it. She is making me a better person by telling me to stay out of trouble. And that's how I know she really cares! I thank God for giving me something special.

-Jerry

From The Beat: We'll praise God, too, for sending this angel on earth to you. But now, you must not be listening too well or you wouldn't be writing this from a junior-jail cell. When she tells you to stay out of trouble, she doesn't mean get slick about it but tells you not to do wrong 'cause you can live without it, right?

Girl, Family, Street

If I had two hours of freedom, I would go to my girlfriend's, and talk to her, and tell her I miss her, and you know the rest of it. I would probably go to get some more time, and go to my mom house and tell her I love her. Then I would go to the block and say what's up to my friends. And then I would go to the street and go try to get some money to go shoppin'.

-Andre

From The Beat: It's that going to the street to grind that has you locked up doing time, whatever the charge that brought you in, 'cause that's where all the trouble begins. If you want to keep your freedom after your release, you'll have to stay away from crime in the streets.

Two Hour Pass

if i was given two hours of freedom
i would go home
hang with my family fo' a min'
then hang out with my ninjas
to smoke and drank
then go to my girl's house
to talk and cupcake then leave
and that's what i'd do
if i had two hours of freedom

-Big Liou

From The Beat: Smoke and drink and come back to Camp, get drug-tested and come up dirty. Then you lose your weekend home visit, 'cause you couldn't take two hours of freedom without smoking and drinking. What are you thinking?

Family Barbecue

If I had a two-hour free pass, I would be with my one-and-only family that cares about me. Then I would go to the park and have a barbecue, have a fun time! Then the last three or four min' — be with my lady, yadadamean?

-Themaniac

From The Beat: Sounds cool, but don't talk about your lady like she's just a pleasuring tool.

Two Short Hours

i would see my family for a little bit
then i would go kick it with my homies
and find out what's goin' on with everybody
but two hours is hell short
i couldn't really do anything
but smoke a blunt of purple then

-Anthony

From The Beat: Too many smoke a blunt instead of figuring out what they really want to do and then doing it! Don't give up after your release as easily as you do in this fantasy of freedom.

Two Hours Of Freedom

Well, if I had two hours out of here? Well, you know what all the real ninjas would do — keep it solid. Hit my girl's house with a big bottle of Hennessy! Get a quick home-cooked meal from her, 'cause she know how to put it down in the kitchen! And the bedroom, too, so you know the rest. Then I'll be cool for another sixty days all over again.

-Jerry

From The Beat: You've got to motivate yourself not just to do a good program while you're in here, but do the right thing while you're out there — 'cause then you don't have to wait for a temporary release to see the one who makes you happy. And forget about the Hennessy 'cause her love is all you need.

Two Hours With Family

If I were given 2 hours of freedom I would wanna spend it with my family. Probably go eat at a restaurant with them just have a good time with them. I would tell them how much I miss them and cherish every moment of those two hours with my family.

-Margarita

From The Beat: We hope you get to have that time with your family really soon.

Two Hours of Love

if i had two hours
i will see my familia
and just have fun
being with my familia
i will love to be with my grandmother
and just seeing her face
will make me happy
just talking to her
and having my son in my arms
playing with him
i want to have both of my sons
i just love them
so much

-Carl

From The Beat: With all this love overflowing the chambers of your heart like a fountain, you need to decide to change the way you're living your life — for the sake of your sons and your grandmother. Keep living the way you are, and you'll end up dead, in-and-out of jail or locked away in prison — and your sons don't need an absent father. And your grandmother doesn't need anymore heartbreak in her long life. Take this love and use it to motivate yourself to make some fundamental changes.

Free Me!

i want to be free
and value my life

-Aleshia

From The Beat: Start with the second and the first will follow.

'Bout to Get Out!

they say i got one week to go
before i get out of here
so i am gon' do my best
to stay out this time and
never come back

-Fatboy

From The Beat: Will you do your best to stay out of trouble or just not to get caught? (Hint: everyone gets caught sooner or later, even if it appears to be for something unrelated.)

My Happy Place

My happy place is in prayer.
Also when I read my mind ventures.
It goes into the story.

I find myself reminiscing.

I love to dream of future, what's to come.

-Futurama

From The Beat: It's always fun to think about the future—the possibilities are endless, and in our dreams we can have the life we've always wanted. Do you think also about what you'll need to do in order to make your future what you want it to be?

Two hours Of Homelife

If I had those two hours I'd go home, eat some cheese burgers and French fries, chocolate cake and orange sodas with my girlfriend. We should have some time, and also spend time with family. Grandma off tops.

-Yummy

From The Beat: That sounds like a delicious two hours.

My Happy Place

If I had a happy place, it'd be a mansion with everything that I need — like a mini-fitness room and a little game room, just for me and my kids. And I'd have my trophy room for all my memories, and a car full of dogs, and a movie room, and a maid, and a nice, big dinning room! That'd be my nice, happy place.

-Brandon

From The Beat: Hey now, it doesn't sound bad at all. And besides all the rooms, it sounds like you'd have a wife and children to fill up the house, and your heart as well (and all those dogs).

Free Time With Family

If I were given two hours of freedom, I would spend them with my mother, my brothers and my sisters, 'cause they have always been there for me. I remember in my early childhood, spending time with my family, going every morning with my grandpa 'cause I was his favorite nephew! And it has all passed away. I really miss my grandpa, and I wish he was still alive. RIP.

-Jose

From The Beat: You can't bring your grandpa back to life, but you can keep the memory of his love alive in your heart, and you can let it inspire you to be there for your family that's always been there for you. Now that may mean you have to give up some of the things you do with the homeboys. You feel? Think about what got you locked up and what you need to do and not do to stay safe and free on the outs with your family.

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never dream of doing if she had not
suggested it

Playin' With My Release

I'm hella mad, 'cause they are playin' with my release. I have been here for two months, and I am tired of bein' here for real. My PO told me that I was supposed to get two interviews on Thursday and Friday, and I never go the interviews and it's been a week, not but when I talked to my PO, and she told me they trying to send me to LA or Stockton and I got to cut my hair, and I was like, I can't cut my hair, you feel me?

And then I told her I know I'm going to end up runnin' if I go to LA because of my gang activity. And I don't want that to happen, and I told her if I can go to a placement closer to home, and she said it's not up to me. I was like, you can't even send me to a group home in a city, not a valley, because every time I been to a group home I ran, and they were hella far from home, so since they know I run from the other group homes that are far, they're going to send me even farther. I don't think it's going to help, so I hope they let me go to a group home that is closer to home so I won't run and end up back in here.

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: First off, we know we might have a hard time putting ourselves in your position. You miss your family, you don't know what will happen to your brother, you've lost people you care about, and now, again you find yourself in a situation where someone else is deciding your future. But Vee, we don't see your logic. You run from places that are far away, why do you think you'll be LESS likely to run if you're close by? Sure, LA might cause some gang affiliation drama, but you've run for other reasons besides that, right? So tell us this, why do you think you keep running from placements in general? (Lastly, it sucks that they want you to cut your hair. But man, it will grow back. It's a part of you that no one can take away for long, right?)

I'm Gang Related

I don't like the way they are trying to play us to keep us locked up. They talkin' 'about this fake ass shhh they 'bouts to do in the Units. They trying to bring people in to see if we are in gangs, or to see if we bang a turf, to see us stay locked up. So I say "ef" 'em, It don't matter I'm not talkin' 'bout nothing with nobody they bring in. They bringin' these people because they want us to talk to them or play ourselves.

-Gang Related

From The Beat: We respect your desire to stay away from getting played, but you already know that in the long run, no matter how much pride you and your friends take in your loyalty and your work, you played yourself the minute you signed up to be in a gang or if you are not in a gang, then the moment you broke the law. So long as you stick with it, you will ALWAYS be at the mercy of the police, the counselors, the judges, the system. That's one of the reasons we ask you all not to write your turfs or affiliations, we don't want you to play yourselves in our system. It's not for hating on you - it's the opposite: We think you deserve better than that.

Looking Real Militant

Man, what it do, Beat? Man, this lil' Glen, still in the Hall! Feel me? Doin' my time like a real solid dude should. Feel me?

Just had a talk wit' my PO, and it's lookin' real militant! They said I might be goin' to da 'Y' for four years, or maybe do eighteen months in ROP (Rites of Passage). But knowin' me, I 'm gon' refuse ROP! A ninja like me can't wake up in the morning and run a mile or play basketball and shhh. Feel me?

So I 'm gon' go ahead and tell the judge to let me do nine months in here. Feel me? I ain't listening to nothing else. Feel me? Like I said, it's lookin' real ugly.

-Lil' Glen

From The Beat: The idea of ROP is that you keep all the best of yourself while at the same time you build up the rest of yourself. Yeah, it might be the hardest thing you ever did, but after a while, body and mind both will strengthen. Sure, you can ask to do your time in juvenile hall, but when the judge says, "The 'Y' or ROP, it's your call!" - you don't have to listen, 'cause the judge doesn't need your permission to send you away to CYA.

Two Hours With My Fam, My Girl, My Ninjas, My Brother

Mayn, if I had two hours of freedom, I would be at my house with my family, mom, sisters, my patnas and mainly my little mamas. But then I would have my whole family at my house.

I'll spend like a half-an-hour with my family, a half-an-hour with my homies, and a half-an-hour with my girlfriend.

The rest of the time I would spend time with my ninjas and my little bruh bruh little Vee.

Anyways, I wish y'all luck. All of y'all better do y'all program whatever y'all get. Get y'all shhh straight so y'all ninjas can come see me up in jail or wherever I'm at.

Oh yeah, and I wish we still had my scrape scrape so we can all go dumb like we use to.

Y'all know what's up and I hope y'all do it up for my birthday.

-Mike

From The Beat: Happy Birthday, Mike. We're sorry you have to spend it in here, separated from the people you love. The way you manage to smile each week when we see you is an inspiration, keep the high spirits up, and we're looking forward to printing more of your writing and especially your art!

Free With My Family

if i had two hours of freedom
i would spend it with my family
because i know i'm gonna be
locked up for six months
so i would spend it with my family

-Jacob

From The Beat: Facing this time, you are now mindful of just how important even two short hours with your family would feel to you. So in six months time, when you're released, make the right decisions so you can be foreveraftering with your family - happy, joyous and free! Ask yourself what you need to give up by day and by night to keep what's really most important in your life.

My Grandma's House

if i could go anywhere and be happy
i would go to my grandma's house
i would go just to be with my grandma
i love her so much
i just wanna be free from everyone
how she use to cook for me
i didn't like taking advantage of her
so I started working

-Barty

From The Beat: Working at a legitimate job, or working the grind on the street? A job to help your grandma financially is all good, but putting your freedom and life at risk grinding in the street, is the worst thing you could do to your grandma and yourself, too - 'cause there always comes a time when you have to pay, and it costs your grandma more heartache and pain than is worth the money you gained.

Two Hours

i would go home
smash something
take my sister to the mall
and drop something nice on 'em
you know
and go see my dad's grave

-King

From The Beat: Swear at your dad's grave that you'll change your ways, 'cause you want to be there for your family and your sister more than ever with your dad passed away. RIP.

My Girl

My special place is at home with my girl in bed. That's her favorite place and she wants to spend all her life with me. We are also going to the Virgin Islands. (For my two hours of freedom, I'll kick it with my granny and my female for an hour.)

-Dreamin' On

From The Beat: We hope you get all the time you need to be back with your girl in the near future, and that you get your dream and go to the Virgin Islands with her. What will it take to make that dream come true?

People Forget About You

What's up wit it Beat. This yo' boy Manman up and and I'm just trying to keep my head up and do my time or not let the time meet me. I am going to write about how people do you when you come to jail. When you on the outs, people always asking you for something and want money from you for themselves, but as soon as you come to jail it's a different story for you or for them.

They don't even want to write you a letter or come see you in jail, and they just forget about you and go on about they own love, but as soon as you get out they all up in yo' face and shh. You know what I mean.

Just keep yo' head up and do your time.

-Manman

From The Beat: You know that old blues song "Nobody loves you when you're down and out." You sure as hell find out who your true friends are the minute it gets harder for them to see you. So what do you do, to cope? How do you develop the strength inside to get through that feeling of abandonment when you're locked up? We see you each week, usually in good spirits, even though you're fighting a serious case - how do you keep your spirits up? Tell us, share it with The Beat, and more importantly, with all the other people in similar situations who read The Beat.

The Perfect Home

The perfect home for me is a mansion. Each room should be a large master room. Each bathroom's got a Jacuzzi and a large bath tube or shower. In the living room there should be a large plasma T-V and hella movies and games too. The kitchen should be full of food.

-Vu

From The Beat: That sounds like a luxurious and comfortable home. Would you have any loved ones there to share it with you?

Leaving on A Jet Plane

If I had two hours of freedom I would first chill with my baby mama and my son. Once I made sure they were fine, I would pick up my cousins and go find my ninjas and kick it with them. I would grab some money, and then I would get a plane or ticket to some other state where I had family, probably Atlanta.

Most ninjas would lie and say they wouldn't try to run, but I'm a keep it solid. If they gave me a ten minute period of freedom I would cut.

-Young Weezy

From The Beat: Who wouldn't want to take off first thing? It's cool that you were honest on paper, and we've read enough of your writing by now to know that you always keep it real when you write for The Beat. Here's the thing though, when you run, you end up being a refugee, right? Like you can't get a legit job, you always have to fear being on record (it means you can't vote, can't register for a phone an apartment) and even a parking ticket puts you in the sights of 5-0. Plus you'd have to miss out on watching your son grow up. When you think about it, if you only had a few years to serve, wouldn't it be better to stay? Have you ever been on the run before? Was it stressful, always worrying about getting caught?

My Hood's My Happy Place, Straight Up!

What's crackin' Beat and Beat readers! This the homeboy Lil' Mocos from Hayward, and my "happy place" is in my 'hood, straight up! I'm not trying to glorify my 'hood or gunplay in anyway, but when I'm in the 'hood — that's when I feel the happiest and safest!

See I grew up in 'hood! No matter if it's sunny, rainy or cloudy, and no matter if I'm mad or sad, I love being in my 'hood! Being there, it's just like a natural high! It never fails to cheer me up. What can I say? I'm just a fella that needs to be in my 'hood to feel good.

-Lil' Mocos

From The Beat: You're no doubt safer in juvenile hall than you are posted in your 'hood, which doesn't mean you're happy to be locked up. It does mean that if you're feeling safest in your 'hood, it's an illusion. Familiarity feels comfortable, so you feel comfortable; and there are people you love there, and you associate that love with the 'hood itself. Cool. But safe? If you and your homie both strapped, watching each other's back, you're still not safe — man, that whole scene says that you're not safe. Maybe the 'hood is not the best place for you to be, no matter how much like home it feels. And if you don't want to be locked up either, then what are you going to do?

Give Me More Time

Why I don't need more time, because I don't want to be in here, because of my bras up there, all looking down at me like Lil' Scoot, Chavo, Wiellie, Eric -- that's all I can think of.

I'm thinking that they're about to give me one more chance so I can go home with my family where I belong and to stop every thing, like being in the street, riding around with my bras in a van, or budget smoking and drinking or off hella pills, but that's the end of the story because I need to stop all of that.

-Lil' Luis

From The Beat: Check it out – in this piece, you almost let yourself take that wrong path down memory lane, and then suddenly you stopped yourself, because you wanted to "stop all of that". It's a tiny step, but life is about putting one tiny step in front of another until we get to where we want to go. Congratulations on this one!

What It Do Beat?

Will they say that I leave in like two or three days to go to a group home three hours away from here? But you should know that this is your girl, Baby Gurl,

I come from them Oakland streets

they is now just coming to see me and tell me that I get to go to that group home you feel me and all I have to do is 9 months and I have been here for 3 months then got to do another 9 months at that group home and pimp that shhh.

You feel me, well I got to go. See you later. And see my lil baby girl and my ninja.

-Baby Girl

From The Beat: Nine months sounds like a long time to be away from your daughter, but it could be a whole lot worse. We hope you finish your program and get out to start fresh with your baby. The baby deserves a fulltime mother, not a part time selfish mother stuck in the system! Work on bettering you!

Fallin'

late at night tears coming down my face and i'm fallin' fallin' to my knees, praying, hoping god can hear me callin' but these streets keep callin' my name and it's a damn shame only sixteen and i can't be tamed from this game i don't got no good memories of playing sandlot i just remember getting ready for school kissin' momma then hit the spot thirty-eight in my pocket, backpack full of sacks countin' cheese in the class, ballin' to the max i got a mind full of demons and a heart full of hate the only thing i want in life is to bust my glock and get that cake all this bad shhhh in my life and know it's gon' cross me i just hope the cross on my neck gon' keep the reaper off of me

-Jb

From The Beat: That cross on your neck doesn't work magically. It symbolizes the ultimate gift of a man whose life ended tragically. For that cross to protect you, you must start to connect to the divine love in that man's heart for all mankind. Hate is what nailed him to the cross in a world where anger, weaponry and greed call the shots. The demons in your mind and the hate in your heart, are what have you feeling like you're falling apart. But if you really do choose to fall to your knees and pray, pray to God for the strength to start living a better way. Until you're willing to let go of the demons, the guns, the rage and the hate, the shadow you cast will look like the reaper that dogs your steps and looks like your fate. We're not hating. All we're saying is the Cross brings salvation to those ready to change today.

My Happy Place: Take a Guess

My happy place has exactly seven pictures of me, a full size bed, my girlfriend posted, and a futon couch next to a tan dresser with a vanity mirror. It is in Richmond California. Guess where this place is?

-Lil' J

From The Beat: Hahah, we went back and forth on this... at first we thought it was your room, then we figured if it had seven pictures of you, that meant that a girl who loves you must have put them there, so we're figuring that maybe your happy place must be your girl's room. Are we right?

Happy In My Room With My Music

my happy place was my room
i could go to my room and listen to music
and forget about my problems
but now i'm locked up
and can't enjoy my happy place

-Sleepy

From The Beat: So think about what changes you need to make in your life style to insure you stay out and free? Figure out the chain of events that lead you here, and then cut it off way before it gets critical next time.

Free With My Family and My Girl

if i had two hours of freedom
i would spend one hour with my family
and go eat at a restaurant and have fun with my family
i spend the second hour with my girlfriend
because she means a lot to me
she is always there when i need her
she always keeps me up and gives me more strength

-Sleepy

From The Beat: Sounds all good! Now tell us, does your girlfriend help give you the strength to stay out of trouble on the outs, or does she smile and wave as you ride off into it?



To Camp I Go

What's up with it, Beat! First off, I would like to pay my respect to all doing time. Keep y'all heads up!

Well, I just got interviewed to go to Camp. So to all the homeboys in Camp, me and my otha homey coming through. Well, I got to do six months, if I'm good. I just wanna get out fast as I can so I can be back to the streets and fam! You feel me? Well, it's 'bout that time.

-Lil' Boxer

From The Beat: Odd that when you were in max, you eyes took in the homies but also looked forward to your success on the outside. Now you're on your way to Camp, and all you write about is getting back to the street! Your prospects of staying free, don't sound good here.

Do Over

If I had a do over I will go back to the day I went to the track and started hoeing, you feel me, and that was when I was eleven years old.

-Batsy Girl

From The Beat: We wish every young girl in your situation could go back to the moment she started selling her body and do it over again differently. We hope that when you get out you can start from where you are now and move on to a different life. You can change your old ways!

This Home

My definition of home is a home that you can stay in; you could have your own bed, own room.

-Homebody

From The Beat: Yes, that does sound like home.

what i miss from my
childhood is my cousin
before we started to
hang around with the
wrong people

My Old Friends

i just wanted to say to my ninjas
that's been in jail locked up
i know how ya feel
so just keep ya head up
i'm wit' ya
this for all my ninjas from e p a
i know it ain't good to be glorifying turf
but it's just where i grew up
and had my best memories
so i just wanna say
keep ya head up

-Barty

From The Beat: You really don't glorify here, and coupled with your other little poem, "Childhood Memories", with its tragic ending — yeah, keep your head up. Also get your mind clear that you need to make some changes in what you think and do — to stay out of here!

Childhood Memories

the thing i miss most about my childhood
is when i used to wake up and all the people
on the street in east palo alto is all there
on summer days all the people living in the small e p a cul-de-sac
would all come out and have one big water balloon fight
and now they are all either dead or in jail

-Barty

From The Beat: That is the saddest ending to remembering your childhood fun that we've ever read — all dead or in jail! And here you are, too, locked away. You can't change anyone else, but it's time to change your fate, 'cause you don't need to end up this way.

What I Miss From Early Childhood

I miss that when I was younger, me and my friends used to have fun. Now what I see is some of my friends that didn't make it to see 2004. I miss my loved ones that's gone. I miss how me and my friends used to go around doing things. If it was bad or good, we were having fun.

-Marcus

From The Beat: Man, this made us want to hear more about your good stories from being younger. What's the most fun memory you have, and could you share it with The Beat?

Two Hours Of Home Living

I will go home and eat dinner with my family and invite all of my friends and family. I would eat two plates and bring one back. Have a big celebration/party.

-Jason

From The Beat: Sounds tasty! We bet it would be hard to leave, 'cause we all know how fast two hours goes by.

Much Love

If I had two hours of freedom, I would spend time with my family and tell them how much I love them.

After an hour, I'd go spend the other hour with my girlfriend and do the most I can with her for that hour — then go and hop in the shower.

-FreeMan

From The Beat: After your release, show your love by staying away from trouble, or your girl and your family will miss you double.

Happy Place

my happy place
is in the music studio
because i love to
play the piano
and make a lot of beats
in the studio

-Jacob

From The Beat: Make sure whatever else is going on in the studio, your heart, mind and body remain a drug-free zone. 'Cause you're going to need to keep a clear head to keep yourself out of the system and free to be at the studio or your own home.

I Miss My Cousin

what i miss from my childhood is my cousin
before we started to hang around with the wrong people
we enjoyed playing out in the streets
but now we can't even post out in the block
because we watching our backs not to get shot

-Sleepy

From The Beat: You need to get up out of there. It sounds like you're safer locked up than you are at home, and that's not right. Is there another family member living elsewhere that might take you in? Of course, you also need to be ready to change your life in a new place.

Two Hours Home

for real i'll go home
say hi to family
and who ever else i run into
buy a dub and some drank
and kick it with a female

-Anthony

From The Beat: Would you still need the smoke and drank if we said you'd be drug-tested when you came back, and if you tested clean, you'd get another pass to visit your home scene?

Two Hours Free

what would i do
if i had two hours
keep it real though
i would be at my mom's house
chillin' with all my loved ones

-Fatboy

From The Beat: Remember to show your family that this is how you really feel after your release. Don't let the street make a stranger at home, or you'll be back in here truly alone.

When I'm Out

i'm'a act a donkey
you know, have fun
act a donkey mean
just go crazy —
act like you don't
got no sense.

-Lil' Eli

From The Beat: Don't you think acting like you got no sense is what got you here? Why not show some good sense and stay out and free?

Run!

if i had got two hours of freedom
i would go see my family
get some
then try to make a run for it

-Desperado

From The Beat: Now that's why no one in 150 Hall gets a pass to go home, go to a job or go to school. Those who run pull more time when caught, and also ruin it for everyone else locked up.

The Chair

when i'm in juvenile hall
i always think i still
got a chance to get out

-The Chair

From The Beat: Are you the chair-man of the bored?



Your Boy

It's your boy J-Stubba, and I am still in this shhh-ass place doing shhh. I got to go somewhere and do six months, but it's nothing to a boss 'cause I am gone get through this an' get back home to my baby. Me and her got a lot of shhh for us right now. All I need is to get home and we will be happy together and can do the things we want to do in life. It's good 'cause soon as I get home we getting on. We done with the block.

-J-Stubba B4

From The Beat: Well, we're glad that you are done with the block, but we're not whether you really understand the responsibilities you're talking about. When you say all you need is to get back to your baby and everything will be all right, we worry, because we know there are so many challenges to making a living and staying out of trouble. Do you have a plan in mind how you're going to succeed at that?

I'm Back

Yeah, ya boy is back
Young Money aka T Money
And I'm back in the scene
Puttin' my team
Back on the map
And you'll always need
A gangsta like me
On the scene
See, when I get out
I'm gonna be working
With The Beat Within
Yeah, ya boy
Down at the Ranch
'Bout to get out
And I'm back
It's just a different day
Same time
In a different month
Yeah, that's what's up
Holla at me
I'm back on the streets
In two weeks
Look for me
One love
And I'm out

-Young Money LCRS

From The Beat: Here you are writing your playboy thug stuff, almost exclusively, again, Young Money. You know you can write tenderly and thoughtfully about your lady and child, but what happens to you beyond that? We don't want to hear about your thug, gangsta life. You'll have many choices when you get your freedom back, including going back to school, to college, etc. Or you can hang back in the streets and end up, where? YA? Or worse? The Beat would love to hire you, but we don't need to hear the bull about how you're all that in the game. If you're serious about writing, going to school, working, we'd love to work with you.

Do You Know Me

Do you know me?
No! You think you know who I am
See it's funny how the white man sees me as a black girl that's not going anywhere.
Tell me, do you know me?
All you know is my name, what color I am and my gender.
Oh yeah, and my social security number.
But you don't see me because you don't know me.
But it's okay because that white man sees
But soon it going to be like
that's what the black see our women.

-Jennifer GU

From The Beat: We know the white racism you feel is very real, but we also know that if you see all white people in the same way, you are equally guilty of racism. Do you think there are white people who are truly dedicated to your prosperity and success? Are there black people who want to pull you down? Is there any way for you to get beyond judging people by what color they are, and letting them prove themselves, one way or the other? We're not sure what your last line really means. Can you explain it to us better? What are you going to do when you are free to prove that the people who have judged you are wrong? If success is the best revenge, how do you plan to succeed?

Love

Love confused the hell out of me
Don't know if I do or I don't
I mean I miss you
You make me happy
You the one I want to make a family with
You make me smile and that's hard to do
Yo say you love me back
But I don't understand, you show no love
So alone I stand, I get really mad, say, "Forget that chick"
But five minutes later I'm like, "I miss my chick"
I love you, but I'll move on if I have to
So wit' that said, do you or do you not?

-Famoso Moso B4

From The Beat: Love confuses the hell out of everyone! Sometimes, it seems like heaven and nothing can bring you down. Sometimes it feels like hell, and all we want is out! Asking her if she loves you or not won't get you what you want to know. In love, it's what people do and not what they say that counts. But at least one thing is good about it — if she turns out not to be the one, there will be another down the road.

I'd Run

With those two hours I would not come back to the hall because I do not like this place, and when I leave I will get out of state.

-Lil' Kata B1

From The Beat: Getting out of state costs money. How would you get it? Running from the things we don't like to do is what we do when we're children. Standing and facing our problems directly is what we do when we're adults.

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I was given two hours I would go to Chinatown for some Vietnamese noodle (pho) with my homeboy and homegirls. Then I would go get a lot of drink and weed to get as high as I could before coming back to YGC.

-Weapon B4

From The Beat: You mean you wouldn't even go to see your family? Is pho more important than your mother? (By the way, what's the best pho restaurant in the city? We love pho...)

Messed Up In That Box

Man, I'm in here, trippin'. Shhh, messed up in that box. Like, what's this? Y'all treat us like lil' dogs or something. Man, y'all don't have to treat us like that. Show us some love. I just feel messed up, 'cause me, my daddy, and most of my ninjas locked up in some type of box. Hell, something's gots to change. We gots to get up out of that box. I'm out.

-DJ Druma B1

From The Beat: The most important thing you wrote, DJ, is that "something's got to change." Since we know the system will not change (it will just keep responding the same way it always responds, which is why you, your daddy and most of your ninjas are locked up! So, since "they" won't change, it's up to you to change. Unless you find a new way to do things (and a way to stop doing other things), you will be right back in the box — which will always be messed up and will always make you feel like a dog in a cage. So, knowing all that, do you see yourself changing when you leave here? Tell us what changes you're willing to make.

Love Is

Love is like day an' night
Love is like a nice sunset
Love is like a nice wife
Love is like a newborn child
Love is like blood that go through your body
Love is like me and you

-Lil' Man LCRS

From The Beat: So love is essential to your heart, right? It sounds like you love as much as you get love, so that should be all good. We love your little poems!

Rain

Rain is nice
Like ice
So be nice
To get a bike
An' eat some rice

-Lil' Man LCRS

From The Beat: Well, it rhymes. Why don't you compare rain with rice? How it feels when it hits your skin hard? If your eyes are closed tightly, could you tell the difference?



Happy Place:

My happy place is my girlfriend's house, because I get treated like a king over her house. Like when I am sitting down, they bring me stuff, like drinks, and at my house my mom and dad say, "Get it yourself."

-Metro B1

From The Beat: Do you ever reverse roles and treat your girlfriend and her family like royalty? Do you think girls should serve boys, or do you think it's a 50-50 proposition? Do you help your mom and dad when you're at home? What are your chores around the house?

I Would Come Back

If I got two hours of freedom from YGC, I would go visit my family. I will think about coming back, but I think I would come back so I can get out again and go and see my girlfriend.

-Jamain B1

From The Beat: It's a sign that you're growing up if you play it straight, do what you need to do to get out and stay out of juvy. It means you're thinking about the long-term, and that's good!

I Would Not Come Back

If they let me leave the halls for two hours, I would not come back, because I get tired of listening to what people say. So, me, personally, I would go to another state and live, because this shhh out here is nothing good. Always in this turf. Shhh, man, sometimes I just need to leave San Francisco because I feel it is not good to be watchin' my back everywhere I go to see if a ninja is going to smack me, so that is why I would get on.

-Jamal B1

From The Beat: We appreciate why you want to get out of the city, Jamal, but running is not the way to do it because you still would be having to watch your back all the time as a fugitive. No, the best solution is for you to do your program, whatever it is, then figure out a way to leave the game and the streets that bring you here. If that means leaving the city, find a way to do that. If it means leaving the state, wait until it's legal for you to do that, and find a way. Do you have family anywhere else that could help you relocate? Have you spoken to them about the possibility?

personally, I would go
to another state an' live,
because this shhh out
here is nothing good

My Garage

My happy place is the garage where my brother's studio is. I do not rap, I just go on the computer and make CDs. Then I also have a lot of x-rated material in the garage. I also sleep in my garage.

-Boom B1

From The Beat: Whose choice was it that you sleep in the garage, you or your family's? What kind of CDs do you make? What else do you have there that makes it like your own room?

A Vato Standin' Tall

Keep your heads up, homies
That's exactly what I'm doin'
Makin' the best of what I got
Wearin' other vatos' drawe's
This ain't cool, missin' La Familia
Y mi rucu (and my girl)
This is some messed up shhh
Man, always needing ta ask for permission
To do everything
Chillin' with the little homies
Bein' the oldest in the unit
Dealin' with these ignorant little kids
It's frustratin'
I'm just waitin'
'Til I get out
Hopin' that fams
Is hangin' on all right
I'm out
This is the end

-Crazy B1

From the Beat: You describe yourself as a vato standing tall, but how tall can you be standing when you're wearing county shoes and wearing used drawe's? Doesn't "standing tall" include being with the family that needs you? There really is only one solution to your complaints about being locked up with "these ignorant little kids" and that's not to be one yourself! If you hadn't given the system the power it now has over your life (a power you handed to them), then you would be out with your family. What you do when you're out with them will determine how long you'll be staying with them...

Two Hours

In them two hours, I would come back, because I not in here for that long.

-Metro B1

From The Beat: Good choice, Metro. If you are only here for a short time, are you making plans for when you get out? We hope those plans start with going back to school and graduating. Is that in your future?

TIP Thizzelle Ant

Thizzelle Ant was a important person to me because he was where I'm from and he was my homie. But he wasn't in the beef but he died fo' something stupid. But it's good TIP Thizzelle Ant. He died because the people that killed him was looking for somebody else.

-Lil' Kata B1

From The Beat: We're very sorry you lost your good friend at such a young age. We think that every reason a young person dies on the streets is "for something stupid" because nothing could be more important than a single life. Does the "T" in TIP stand for thizzle? What advice do you imagine he would give you now if he could return from the land of the dead and speak with you?

How I Feel

I'm sitting here in YGC, and all I can do is think I'm 18 and damn, I had my birthday in here. Nothing to do while the world goes on without me. I must break out of this system, get loose before they swallow me up.

-Jennifer GU

From The Beat: What plans do you have to break out of the system? What plans do you have to prevent the system from swallowing you up? Remember, if you don't make the plans you want for yourself, someone else will be making them for you.

I'd Hang With My Family

If I had freedom for two hours, I would go somewhere with my family, have fun, before I come back. But when I come back, it would feel like I could have been out on the street, doing what I wanted to do when I wanted to do it. But I would do something with my ninjas and my fam bam, then come back.

-DJ Druma B1

From The Beat: You clearly see that your family is where your strength lies. But does "doing what you want to do, when you want to do it" ever get you in trouble? Has being locked up here made you want to change any of those things to avoid the same result?

No Peace At My House

My happy place is in my girlfriend's house. At my house I really can't get peace, so I call her and see what she is doing and to see if I can come over, so we can talk and watch movies.

-Jamain B1

From The Beat: It's too bad your house is so chaotic that you can't find any peace there, but it's good that you have a place where you can find it. Why isn't there any peace in your house, Jamain?

Straight To Texas

I would go to the airport, take a Mustang, and go to my house, take my clothes, jump in the car, go straight to Texas.

-Simon B1

From The Beat: Do you mean you would rent a car to drive to Texas? You need a credit card for that... That means you'd be leaving a paper trail for the system to track you, find you and bring you back. We think a smarter path would be for you to finish your program, whatever it is, then leave for Texas in a way that's legal so they can't bring you back.

My Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom, first I would go to see my mom and my brother. Then, when I get there, I'ma get caught up on what I'm missin' out on. Then I would eat all the food in my mom's refrigerator. Then I would go and see my girl and catch up with her, if you know what I mean. Then, when my time is up, I'ma go back and wait 'til I get out to do it again. It would be the same order every time.

-Young Ant B1

From The Beat: Sounds good, Young Ant. Your priorities — family first — are in good shape. All we would add is that we hope school is also a part of your daily routine when you get out, because it's the best ticket you have to stay out!

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I was given two hours of freedom, I would get with the wify to go to the house and make a baby. I would make a baby because I really feel like I ain't living for shhh, and with a baby, I feel like I would have something to live for, have a responsibility in life.

Another reason I would impregnate my girl during my two hours of freedom because when I do get out it ain't no telling if I am going to get murked and want my seed to be left in this earth to carry on my name.

-Tha Kid B2

From The Beat: Even though we can understand the reasons why you would want to make a baby, to do so. You've got things backwards: to be a real father (making a baby does not make you a father), you first have to be a responsible adult, meaning you have to be ready to devote your entire life to that most important job, fatherhood. It's obvious to us that you are still thinking like a child, and therefore bringing another child into the world will only perpetuate a cycle you must break before you take that step. Put some effort into your own life, your own values, your own education, your own future before creating a new life which you are not yet able to support or to be a father to. You have plenty of time to make a family. Make yourself first!

My Favorite Childhood Pastime

My favorite childhood pastime is when I used to kick it wit' my big brah. We used to play video games, like Madden and NBA Live. It used to crack all the time. Yeah, we used to fight all the time, but we had each other's backs, no matter what.

Then we started to grow apart. Then I started to get into trouble, and now I'm in here, facin' a case so serious I don't believe it yet. And when I get out, I'm a get my life together. No joke, I'm a get me a real job and go kick it wit' my big brah, like back when.

-Young Ant B1

From The Beat: What happened that caused your brother and you to grow apart, Anthony? Why did that lead you to start getting into trouble? If you've done something serious to get you locked up, what specific plans are you thinking about for getting your life together again? What will be different? Can your brother help you?

If I Had Two Hours

If I had two hours of freedom, I would go to my house and spend some time with my family, get some weed and go chill wit' my folks and go post on the block. Or I might run and get up out of here but I'm not sure. Or I might go get some weed and mess wit' some beezy. Or I might just spend time with my little sister and watch movie with her and chill with her all day.

-White Boy B2

From The Beat: Of all your choices, the one that would show the most intelligence, sensitivity and just plain good sense is the last one. Does your little sister look up to you? If so, don't you think you owe her a little time, a little attention, a little love? We know how much she would want that. How 'bout you?

My Happy Place

My happy place while I am in here is in my sleep because while in my sleep I am in a whole other world. Wherever I am at is better than being in here. Sometimes I find myself with the homies doing the same 'hood shhhh, and sometimes I find myself with other people.

But wherever I am with my happiness is rudely interrupted by bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! "Rise and shine. Hygiene program. Brush your teeth."

-Tha Kid

From The Beat: Yes, sleep can be a great place to find comfort and release from the stress of daily life. And you've also identified the worst part of it: good dreams always get interrupted when reality bangs on your door.

Cry Babies

These people that work at YGC is punk people that cry over some bull like some juice. These people make \$80,000 to \$100,000 and they want to hold a grudge and shhh like that.

But if I had two hours of freedom, I would go get a female, smoke a lil' bit, eat phat and call it a rap.

-Fat Rat B2

From The Beat: Whatever you think about the staff here, you show through this piece that freedom doesn't mean a whole lot more to you than a little selfish fun. Do you have a family? A mother? Sisters? Brothers? Don't they count for anything?

Two Hours Left

Chea what is it Beat? It's ya boy. If I had two hours to do what I do, I would probably go mess with some females and go see what's popping on the block with the homies, then go mess up some pizza and smoke some 'dro, then call it a day and go see what's cracking with my fam.

-D-Da B2

From The Beat: Is this what you call quality time? If so, your priorities seem a little off to us, considering you put your family at the very end... What has been most important in your life — your females, your food, your weed or your family? Don't you think you owe them a little more than an afterthought?

Your Happy Place

I would like to be at home
That is my happy place
I like home because

It is where I feel most comfortable
I feel safer there than I do in church
I know that there can't nothing ever happen

-George B2

From The Beat: It's good to have a place where you feel totally safe. If it's truly a place where nothing bad can happen, we hope you spend more time in your home than out of it when you get out of this place.

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom, I would spend it with a lady friend, get my sex on with some R & B because that's what puts her in the mood. It would probably be the best two hours with a woman I've ever had since I've never been so long without. I would enjoy every minute of that two hours and hate knowing that I only have two hours.

-Anonymous B4

From The Beat: Well, since you put yourself in a place where there are no available females, we guess that you love some things even more than what you miss...

120 Minutes

If I had two hours of freedom from YGC, I would hit the nest and see what my grandmother was doin'. Since we really don't get phone calls up here, I'll sit and talk to her for the first hour to see how she been.

For my first half of my second hour, I'd just kick it wit' my goons, see what's been goin' down. My last 30 minutes would go my girl to make sure she still in line and keeping it solid.

-Up Top B2

From The Beat: We like the fact that you will spend the first half of your freedom with your grandmother. That shows us you have your priorities in order. As for keeping your girlfriend in line, why should she stay in line when you didn't? You obviously found something more important than her (which is why the system has the power over your life right now), so why should she remain faithful to you? If she had chosen to do whatever you did to get locked up and they took her out of your life, would you remain faithful to her? For how long?

I Don't Miss Anything In My Childhood

I don't miss anything, 'cause my childhood was hella messed up, 'cause I always got into it with my family. So I moved with my grans, 'cause it would be better there than with my mom.

-Jamain B1

From The Beat: It's sad your childhood was so bad, Jamain. How was it living with your grandma? Where will you live when you get out of here?

Freedom In San Francisco

What is freedom in San Francisco? I don't know what freedom in SF is. Somehow I have been in and out of the halls, so I forgot what freedom is 'cause in the halls the day go by hella slow. To keep on getting DRB's and room time drives you crazy. Sometimes I just want to go out and do something bad, like cussin' out teachers and counselors and get sent to the room for four hours. When I get released got to the house and be broke, rob someone and come right back. So for me there is no freedom in San Francisco.

-Young Pancho B1

From The Beat: If you rob people, then you can pretty much count on losing your freedom wherever you live. It's not about San Francisco, it's about you. If being locked up drives you crazy, then stop doing the things that lead you to get locked up. If you keep doing those things (like robbing people), then maybe you like being locked up. Maybe you like going crazy...

Ghost Two Hours

If I had the two-hour freedom
Be with the one I love just to get that chance to feel her soft
thighs and lips
To hear her voice
To hold her in my arms until the two hours are up
At the end to whisper in her ear to say,
"Let's get away
Never to be found again
Leaving without a trace
Ride till the end with the one I love"

-Uce B2

From The Beat: We hope your girl will answer your whispered suggestion to run by saying, "Are you crazy? Do you want to start this process all over again? Do you really want me to lose you forever?" In other words, we hope she has more sense than you do.

Two Hours Of Shopping

If I was given two hours of freedom, I will go home and smoke fat blunts, listen to lil' Wayne, take a long-ass shower, mess wit' a few rippers for a minute. I will spend time wit' lil' bra and sis, kiss moms 'cause I ain't seen her in a min, see pops, say, "What's up wit' you?"

I would go shoppin' in the 'hood, get some J's and Lacoste shorts, mayne, and some LRG. I won't be wit' my girl 'cause I ain't feeling her right now for real at this moment 'cause she did something foul.

I will not run because I'm tryin' to get out of the hellhole. And if I run I'm going to be in here for longer and that's stupid if I run. I will enjoy my freedom for a two hours, it's bigga.

-P-Nutty

From The Beat: We admire your maturity in seeing the longer picture — that running would only prolong your situation. Sorry about your girl, but all relationships are filled with ups and downs. Will you go back to her when you get out of here, or is it over? If these are the things you would do in a two-hour furlough, what are your real plans for when you walk out of here for real?

Stuff My Face

If I had two hours of freedom, I would go eat chips, cookies, pizza, Jack In The Box, Blondie's pizza, go see my little brother, and go shopping with my little brother and mom. For the last thirty minutes, I would go and smoke for the last thirty minutes, only in a big-ass swisher. Then I would come back to go to court and hope to be released.

-Boom B1

From The Beat: We hope you get to enjoy all these foods with your family, Marlon. When you're back in that position (free and at home), don't forget how much you hated it here, and make the changes you know you have to make in order to stay out of here!

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom, I would go home with my family, then go out with my best friends, go shopping and do things.

-Gary B2

From The Beat: Even with just one sentence, we can tell that you know what is important in your life, and that is your family. Don't let them down by coming back here once you're free.

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom I would go to my girl house and have some sexual intercourse and smoke till I choke. I would also go see my family and spend as much time with them as I could. I would also get like a fifth of some 'heem or two if I feel like getting ripped at the time which I probably would. Get some rips to come by the crib and stunt ya boy. So that's what I would do for my two hours of freedom.

-Young Hitta B4

From The Beat: Not one word about anyone in your family. Does this mean you care more about your weed and alcohol than you care about your mom? It sure seems like that. But even if we're wrong about that, as long as your entire focus is sex and drugs (alcohol is a drug), then you're making preparations to return to lock up since you aren't preparing yourself for anything else.

Having Fun For Two Hours

My two hours of freedom I'll go home, see my broad on the outs, go to the block, smoke a fat one wit' the homies and get drunk on some vodka and orange juice. Mayne, I'll try to get five hours. Matter of fact, I'll try to stay out as long as I want till I get caught again 'cause the halls ain't nothing nice, yo!

For real, I enjoy everything while I can. But yeah, for real, I'm tryin' to get out so I can have 24-7 hours of freedom for real. That's how I feel.

I don't know what other people think about going back out. People like this place for real. YGC. It's not sweet.

-Hot Boy B2

From The Beat: So you don't like it here, but you plan to hit the block, get stoned and drunk, and then try to play whoever gave you the two hours of freedom by stretching it. Sounds to us as if you like it here more than you're willing to admit, since you're writing your own ticket to come back.

Two Hours Of Freedom

What's good Beat? This ya boy JRF Baby, ya heard me. If I had two hours of freedom, man, I would go be with the fams and goons, and spend the rest of the hour and a half wit' my sweet lady, ya dig. I wouldn't run 'cause I wouldn't get the two-hour privileges again, ya dig. But yeah, I'll spend my time wit' my sweet lady.

-Jrf Baby B2

From The Beat: Well, even though you want to give your "sweet lady" three times as much of your freedom as you give to your family. (Actually, more than three times, since you want to split that first half hour between family and "goons.") We can understand why your girl would be on your mind when you're locked up, but we hope you see that your strength and support comes from family — and that you owe them something for it.

My Auntie's House

My happy place is at my tia house. That's a place I can go to and think with my cousin.

-Simon B1

From The Beat: Why is your auntie's house better than your own house? What do you and your cousin do together?

Time With My Family And Girl

I would spend time with my family first for an hour, then I would kick it with my girl. We would probably take her out to lunch or something, then I would probably take her home. I would probably stay for 30 minutes and chill at her house, then I would give her a kiss goodbye and with my family I would probably kick it with my dad and my sister in the low rider cruise, eat a burrito and some tamales, then I would say bye.

-Sko B2

From The Beat: It would be hard to come back after that sweet two-hour outing, but at least you would be full of good food, good feeling and good family memories. That should hold you until you walk out of here with a good plan to stay out of here. What is your plan?

Two Hours Of Freedom

I would spend my two hours with fresh air, in new clothes and boxers. Then I would hit a 'port or two. Scroll through my celly and call the good old bebe bop limper, yadadimeen 'cause I'm hotta than steam witta bottle of 'heem. I wouldn't sleep wit' nobody dough, 'cause my only two hours of freedom ain't gonna be wasted over some o' shhh. You know what, dough, I don't care what you think, I need some dank an' some 'heen to drank. So if you don't like it leave me alone.

-RoRoilla B4

From The Beat: No, you don't need to drink, you want to. That should tell you something about who or what is in control of your life. As long as you keep fiending for alcohol, you'll only continue to postpone doing the serious think about your future that still has not happened. As we've said a thousand times before, there is no problem in the world that alcohol can't make worse!



Two Hours Of Freedom

Me personally, I'll put some of my little homies on with more game about what's really going on in them streets 'cause most of them out there just to be out there for whatever their reason is. It can be for the girls, for the money. Some out there hold the block down. I feel my little hom'es for that, but must choices they make to be on the block holding back from shhh, like them punk females holding my young ninja from going to school.

I know the D ain't that good to turn down an education, and it can't be the money 'cause I stay letting money fall from the sky like rain when I'm around. Most big homies have to find out what make these lil' ninja go to school. I found out a way from my young hom'es by paying them money every day to get them in school. There more to that, but I'm ain't going get to that right now.

-Fashion-T B5

From The Beat: Are you saying that your goal is to get the youngsters who are missing school to go to school? If that is your goal, it's a very good one. Besides paying kids to go to school, what other suggestions do you have to get them to go? Why is it important that they go to school? What about you? Are you planning to finish school when you get out of here? We hope so, because a basic education is essential for succeeding in life without risking life and freedom.

Freedom For Two Hours

I will be with my family and have some fun with them and do good things with them. It will be so cool because I can have fun with them. I can have more fun at my family because I can see my dogs, mom, dad, brother, baby, friends. I will be so fun because I miss all of my family because I am in YGC now.

-Lil' One B2

From The Beat: We can tell that you love your family very much. Do you regret the things you did that allowed the system to take you away from all that love and fun? Are you planning to change anything about how you live when you get out of here so that you won't be in this position of missing all of that again? (What kind of dog do you have? What's his name?)

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom from here I would first go see my homie's broad and get some frustration off. Another thing I would do would be visiting my family. The last thing I would do would be to cross the border and never come back.

-Jokes B4

From The Beat: We want to encourage you to take some things seriously and not always try to live up to your nickname... We don't think you quite get it yet that life is not a joke. We hope that the maturity which hasn't arrived yet comes to you as a free person, but there's little in your writing that gives us much hope for that.

They Say I Won't Change

I hate this spot; I need go home. They treat us like some little kids, and feed us some gross-ass shhh. People say don't do the crime if you can't do the time. I could but I don't wanna do mine. The judge said he's ready to let me go home but the DA and my PO BSin'. They say I'm nothing but a gang member and that's all I'm goin to be. They say I won't change. But I say I will 'cause that's how I really feel. I'm stressin' 'cause all my homies getting out but I'm still in. And these weak-ass phone calls ain't working.

-Yung Bird B4

From The Beat: We don't know if you're going to change or not, Yung Bird, but what you wrote in this piece (especially the last couple of lines that we had to take out) don't give us a lot of confidence... How many times have you promised to change in the past? Why will it be different this time? Why should the system believe your promises? Whether the system (or even The Beat) believes you or not is much less important than what you do. If you keep the promise of change, then it won't matter what any of us believes. If you don't keep the promise, then the fact that you won't be home with your family is all on you.

Dad

I miss when I lived with my dad, because he keep me out of trouble.

-Simon B1

From The Beat: Were you living with your dad when you got into trouble this time? Is he still around?

Hangin' With Family

My happy place is wit' family because they support me while I am in here. But for the next hour I'll hang with friends because you never know when you comin' home, and I'll come back so I can stay out for awhile an' not two hours.

-Guan B1

From The Beat: It's good that you have the support of your family while you're here. How will you pay them back for their support when you're free? We hope you give them what they want, and that is having you at home.

This One Time

This one time I was at my house with my brother and we were chilling smoking some trees. I was like, "What's on TV? Let's watch something funny."

But he said, "Hell naw, I want something to eat." So we made some chile con pollo, carne asada, arroz con leche, rice, beans, tortillas, and some cookies. I started to cook the chile con pollo (chicken with chili), arroz con leche (rice with milk), and my brother cooked the rice, beans, carne asada, and the cookies.

My mom came home, and the place was smelling hella good, but we made a mess, and my mom said, "Jayson Angel Carlos Josue Morano, Jr. and Jose Samayoi! Clean this freakin' mess up now!"

I was like, "All right, mom." She left and went to her room. Me and my brother left the house and went to chill on the block. I went to my homie's house, got on the computer and started ordering things in my cousin's name, left went to go get some drink, got drunk, went home got in trouble and couldn't leave the house for the rest of the day. Left at 12 a.m., went to my homie's house. We took his dad's car, went to a party I got kicked out for being too rowdy and trying to fight everybody.

Went to my half-sister's house, passed out, woke up, went to Redwood City, chilled with my cousin at his house, went to the San Jose Flea market with my auntie. She told on me, and took me home. I got my ass whipped by my mom and my uncle at my house for two days. Left on Friday night, went to the country, got in a fight, got picked up and got grounded for a week.

(To be continued... when I don't listen)

-Lil' Shadow B4

From The Beat: This piece reads exactly like the confessions of a spoiled child, a child used to getting his own way, a child used to doing what he wants — whoever it hurts. You should have stopped after cooking that delicious meal, looked around, and appreciated all that you had (so much more than so many have), and respected it. Instead, you disrespected everything. You let your mother clean up after you, and not just in the mess you left after cooking, but in all the messes you are leaving for her to deal with. Grow up, Lil' Shadow. Being a child has its advantages, and all of us miss the freedom we had when we were a certain age. But when you get beyond that certain age, it's not cute any more. If you have no concern for your own future (and everything you wrote in this piece tells us you are too self-centered to really be thinking about the future), then at least think of everything your mother has done for you, and see if you can come up with a way of showing her how much she means to you. The most important word in that last sentence is "showing" — you can tell her you love her a thousand times a day, but it's your actions that determines the truth of your words.

I Miss My Momma

I miss my momma in my life. I just wanted to have a mom that's there for me and that I can really talk to about anything, but I can't because I don't feel like I can trust her. But I know my mamma though.

-Rodnika GU

From The Beat: What broke that trust between you and your mother? Do you think you will ever learn to trust her again? We don't think you had time to finish this piece. What would you like to add?

Two Hours Of Freedom

What's really good Beat? This yo' boy D-Lo knockin' this time out. It's the same shhh different hype and if I had two hours of freedom, I would probably do it scootin' to Brazil or Amsterdam and smoke multiple blunts back to back. Never would I stay in San Francisco. I already know I'll end up getting blurped by the boys in blue and heading back to the YGC.

And now that I think about it, I ain't going to the halls. I'm going straight to the "eight-fifth," also known as 850 Bryant. It's bad business for real. And its mandatory that I go shopping and be with my fam' bam and maybe post up with my babe. You never know until it happens.

And if I get caught, it's back to the YA for a hot minute. But that's what I ain't gone do. It's not my job and it's not on the agenda. I already know if I had the chance, it's like a 50/50 percent chance I gone follow through with what I said. I'm 18 years old and still ain't listen. Thanks! Much love.

-No Name B5

From The Beat: One word of caution: Brazil police just shoot down kids for no reason, and even Amsterdam has laws that can lead to jail. In other words, it's not where you are but what you are doing that's important. When you say there's a 50/50 chance of following through on your promise, which promise are you talking about? Nobody ever plans to get caught, but our country puts more people in jails and prisons than any country in the world! So, a lot of people's plans get frustrated. Don't be one of them.

Catch Me At The Movies

If I had two hours of freedom, I probably would not come back. If I had two hours of freedom I would go chill with a girl and maybe go to the movies. And watch "Chainsaw Massacre 2." I would go to Oakland.

-Tariq B1

From The Beat: How long do you think you'd stay out if you ran and got no farther than the movie theater in Oakland? Do you mean you would risk getting yourself locked up for even longer just to see "CM2"? We suggest you wait till you get out legally and rent it.

Shoot Out

The time I look is when I'm aware

I'm running down the street from the cops

I'm scared

I think to myself

"Should I?" Naw, I shouldn't care

I shoot, they shoot back

Now I'm trapped

waiting for my PO to tell me it's a wrap

I'm in fo' life

Now, dreams of me dying comes to life —

not as death

but closer I get every night

I sleep, wake up

same thing again

Hope I get out without reachin' my end.

-Famoso Moso B4

From The Beat: Did you really have a shoot out with the police? If so, what were you thinking? When you say, "I'm in fo' life," you can't mean you've been sentenced to life, so do you mean you're in the game for life? If so, you're prescribing a short life for yourself — due to incarceration or worse. What is that end you hope you don't reach before getting out? What are you doing to make sure that when you do get out, you'll be able to stay out?

We Need Help

I am here chillin' with the homies. They swear they're getting out soon, so it's funny to me. Especially one of the homies. He hella dumb, but I don't blame him. It's all that shwaca he does. Hopefully he get some help. I always tell him I am here for him when he needs some more. As for one of the other homies, he's going 51-50 in here he need a psych. And the last one, he's kind of the other side of humanity if you know what I mean. But its all good.

-Sleepy B4

From The Beat: It sounds like the four of you could use all the help you can get. Of course, we're not going to let you name the people you call dumb, crazy and inhuman... But tell us, after your descriptions of each, how could you describe the situation as "all good?"

Memory

My happy place would be Chinatown. I have a lot of memory there. We would always chill in playgrounds, drink, smoke and fight there. Every block I go to there always a group of people I know. It feel good and safe being in Chinatown.

It's hella fun on July 4 and Chinese New Year when we light hella fireworks and we be shooting fireworks off the project building onto the street. We be shooting at each other like a war or something.

My homeboy be doing some stupid thing for the hell of it. Like this one time we put hella smoke bombs and lit a lot of bottle rockets in a Port-O-Potty during the Carnival. When the guy opened it, he was like, "What the hell?" Lol, and we started laughing. Peace out!

-Weapon B4

From The Beat: Well, this sounds funny as long as we weren't the ones in the Port-O-Potty... Do you plan to do anything different when you get back to the streets so that you can have fun without risking giving up your freedom? For example, do you plan to keep drinking and smoking on those playgrounds? If so, we can count on seeing you again...

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I can go home for two hours of freedom, I don't know what I will do first 'cause it's a lot of things I want to do, and I only got so much time. But I think I will go to my girl house first, and you know what that mean.... Till I got like 30 or 25 minutes left.

Then I will go see my mom, see how she doing, and my brothers and sister. And if I still got time left, I will probably go see my brahs, see what they up to.

But when it's time to go back to the hall, it's go be hard to go back 'cause I am out and it feel good to be free. But when I think about it, I will go back 'cause I don't want to be on the run looking over my back everywhere I go, so I will go back, get my time over with and be free permanently.

-Berty B5

From The Beat: Does this show your real priorities — almost all your time for your girl, and a quick run through your mom, your siblings, your family? Hmmm, we would think that family would be more important than a 25-minute stop out of a two-hour pass! But anyway, we are encouraged to read that you understand the consequences of running, and they're not worth it. Good for you!

Two Hours Of Freedom

Man, if I had two hours of freedom and I been in here for six months, what you think I would do? Go to ma female house fa like a hour an' a half, then go see moms and the fam, then go chill with the homies, smoke a few chops, ya know how we do, big blunts gold fronts, ya heard. But I'll try to make the best outta them two hours.

To tell you the truth, I wouldn't even run because next time they won't even let me get a home pass. And if I get caught while I'm on the run, I'm chalk. That I'll be hella stupid. But some young dumb ninjas would run. I got too many reasons not to run, 'cause of my family ma girl. My birthday next month on the 16th, feel me. That Scorpio, ya heard.

It's really not that much to do with two hours of freedom. Next thing you know that shhh up and gotta go back to juvi and think about what you just did. You go be mad is D, you know what. But I go to court and hopefully I'll have more than two hours of freedom.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: We would have made this a standout (at least), except we know you like to be on the same page with all the other SF writers in The Beat. We are really encouraged to read that running would not be in the picture if you were to get a two-hour home pass. That shows some real maturity because it shows you are thinking of long-term consequences. As for how you would divide up your time, it seems a little heavy on the sex and a little light on the fam... An hour and a half going at it with your girl leaves just half an hour with your family, the block, the homies, the blunt... everything!

Nowhere To Send Me But The Y

What it do Beat? This be that vato Cartoon from San Francisco. I'm in max security keepin' it gangsta, refusin' the light. I'm waitin' for court October 10. The judge gonna send me to CYA. There ain't nowhere to send me.

Log Cabin Ranch rejected me. ROP rejected me, and Glen Mills rejected me without even interviewing me. Right now I'm on 23-hour lock-down because I got into a fight.

Judge tryin' give me eight years. I ain't trippin'. It ain't nothin'. Whatever time I gotta do, I'ma do it like a soldado, yadda-i-mean.

Well then Beat, I gots to go. To all looked up, keep your head up. One love. Al rato.

-Cartoon B5

From The Beat: We don't know what we can say to you that would make a difference, Cartoon. You keep doing things that only confirm to us that you are still thinking like a child and acting like a child. Even your casual dismissal of eight years of your life as "it ain't nothin'" is a child's response! Let us be clear: The only reason we care so much is that you are a charming, very intelligent boy who could do things with his life other than give it up to the system, which is what it appears you are committed to doing now. When you say, "I'ma do it like a soldier," what do you think the real role of soldiers is? We (who have been through so many more wars than you) can tell you: The role of soldiers everywhere is to die! If that's harsh, it's at least real. The soldier is a tiny little fly speck in a big picture that the soldier has no say in designing or changing. The soldier is a follower (by definition, the soldier follows orders), and not a leader. And when the soldier has served his purpose — when he has given his life for that "cause" he had nothing to do with creating — he is quickly forgotten, and a new soldier steps in to take his place. That's the role you've accepted for yourself, and that's why we cry out in pain when we read your pieces (written from behind your personal locked door, which is in a room you enter through another locked door, which is in a building secured by yet another locked door...). Before you can escape from all these locked doors, you have to escape from the locked mindset that puts you here. As much as we hate to see any young man or woman going off to CYA, maybe it will do it for you. We hope so.

Two-Year Rehab

Well, it been any other day in this "hell hole." They call it jail. So I went to court on Friday expecting to get sent to a rehab for a couple months instead of the ranch. Well, I am going to a rehab, but instead of a couple of months, I'm going for two years!

Now that I've thought about it, it might be for the best. If I would've gone to the ranch, it wouldn't've helped me with my drug problem. So now I have to wait another two months to go off to Bakersfield. Talk to y'all next week.

-Ace B5

From The Beat: You sound very grown up about having to go to a two-year rehab program. Your mature attitude should make it that much easier to learn what you need to learn so that you can confront your problem directly, and regain control over your life. If drugs are putting you in places like this, then you're letting something else lead you around.

Two Hours

Man, if I get two hours of freedom, I will go see my family members for 45 minutes. Then I would go get a lil' pint of Remy and go see my girl friend for an hour and 15 minutes.

But I know that ain't going to happen till I get a full release out of this nasty-ass place. I go to court on Thursday. Hopefully they will release me so I can do that and also go back to my job and start doing the right thing again till I get off probation, then start doin' my thang the smart way that way I wouldn't get caught up.

This lil' Nesto writing from YGC. Holla.

-Nesto B2

From The Beat: Yes, we want to holla! At first, it sounded like you had your priorities in line: seeing your family, thinking about the long-term and doing what you need to do to get off probation. But you undermined all of that by telling us that you think you can go back to doing what put you here without facing the same (or worse) consequences, and that tells us that you are still thinking like a child (a child who has to drink alcohol before hooking up with his girl...). What we want to holla is this: There is NO smart way to do your "thang," and the jails and prisons are filled with people who thought there was. Don't become one of them. Do it the right way, which also happens to be the smart way.

Love

Love is something you have for another person when you are in love with that person. I am going to tell you about the love I had for her. It was like something good because she kept me in line. But when I was not with her, I was with somebody else.

Now I say to myself, "Why did I let her go with some other ninja?"

Now when I see her, she look at me and she say, "Why did you do me wrong?"

I say, "I don't know why I cheated on you."

She just look and say, "I really did love you. I put that on God, but you wanted to play me like one of those girls on the street."

(to be continued)

-Flat Head B5

From The Beat: Unfortunately, males in particular often cheat on the females that they are with, and just as often, they don't even know why. We hope you think about why you cheated, because if you can understand your own actions, maybe the next time you find a girl that you love, you will treat her with more respect.

Time Is Money, Money Is Time

Man, I can't wait to get out of this hellhole for real 'cause real ninja like me got money to make and moves to be made. And, like I said, time is money and all this time I been in here I could be stackin' my dough and getting it for real. I could've at least stacked a couple of racks up, but I had to be in here.

But it's good cause a ninja gone bounce back like he never left, like eighty-eight stacks on Cadillac, ya heard me.

I just want to tell my lil' bra, keep ya head up lil' bra, and when you touchdown you know I got you. And I just want to tell the Beat I like what y'all got going on. This program is a good experience and I'm out.

-Ham B5

From The Beat: Take a careful look at reality: You ARE already stacking dough, but unfortunately, you're stacking it for the system. Everyone who's handled you (and you gave them yourself to handle) has made money off your body, and each time you put yourself into this hole, you make even more money. It seems pretty obvious to us that the only way you are really going to stack chips is if you go legit. and stack a little at a time. Every time you end up here (or worse), you put yourself deeper in the hole, and the deeper you get the more your worth — to them!

My Happy Place

Imagine a place you love to go to

Where the sky is not the only thing that's true

When you get there your homies all show you love

Look up and all you see is that number on tha street sign up above

Man, I wish I could be there every moment of every day

Posted in front of the Walgreens or Safeway

I don't trip though, my happy place never closes

It stays in my mind like the scent of fresh roses

If you ever wanna come see what I'm talkin' about one day

Come through, hop on the bus, it's just a couple bus stops away

-Mouseie GU

From The Beat: Does your happy place already exist, or is this just an imaginary place, a place you wish existed? If you're really describing a street that you know, then we worry that it's also a place where you might get in trouble or even killed.

What's The Deal?

What's the deal?

I wanna know is our love for real?

Or could it be just that I feel?

Your cute face

As long as I'm around and you down nothing

can ever trouble you

The way you touch me on our quality time

Your cute face and that young fresh design

Man, never could we break up, man

Take it slowly, heaven hold me

But your game is so similar to the next but you make it feel right

You got me caught up in the hype

You're sexually the best I confess, man

You got me hooked like a weed head on a chronic

I fell for you, for real for you

Even got me stealing for you man

So what is it and what it do

Never forget I love you boo.

-Jeannie M GU

From The Beat: We have to be blunt, Jeannie. If he has you stealing for him and risking your own freedom and future, then he isn't thinking about how much he cares for you but only about how much he cares for himself. There is no man on earth worth risking going to jail for. We don't care how cute he is or what lies he tells. If you're stealing from him, you'll pay the price (and you'll lose him, too, since he'll need to find someone else to do his dirt once you get locked up).

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I was given two hours of freedom, first off I would go get my daughter and then spend one hour with my family. We would go get something to eat, then we would go to the mall. After I do that I would go to my girl house and do something with her, and smoke some weed with her and just lay there with her. When I'm done, shhh, I guess there's nothin' else to say.

-Big Bills B5

From The Beat: We like the order of your choices — family first (and good food), and then being with your girl. The only thing left to say when it's over is, "Gotta go back now. See you real soon!"

Two Hours

If I was given two hours of freedom, I would go home and spend time with my family because you only have one family, and in most times family is the only ones who really be there when you need them. Yes, I would come back when my time was up because if I ran there would be no point because if and when you get caught you gonna be in deeper shhh than you was before.

-DarDar GU

From The Beat: You are right, running away would only get you (or anyone) deeper into their current situation. If you were given more than just two hours, who else would you spend time with? What are your plans for when you walk out of here for real?

If I would've gone to the ranch,
it wouldn't've helped me with my drug problem.

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of free time, I would go meet up with my girl for about thirty minutes. Then for the other thirty minutes, I would go find my boys, smoke a good two 8th, and then go get a fifth of Privilege Hennessey and get ripped wit' my boys.

For thirty minutes go meet up with my fam-bams and go to Sizzler's all-you-can-eat buffet. I would get stuffed 'cause I know I won't eat like that when I get back. That's just for thirty minutes then I would go spend one-on-one time with my moms because I care about her and I would let her know how much I care and love her. That's about two hours and that's how I would spend that two hours

-Freddy B2

From The Beat: Don't you find it interesting that your mom — who you care and love so much — only comes into the picture after you and your boys got drunk? If alcohol is the first thing on your mind when you think of freedom, then you still have a major problem to do deal with. One thing we know for sure, if you get drunk, then your "good intentions" to spend time with your mom will just go out the window, since alcohol screws with your ability to reason and think clearly. Most likely, if you get ripped with the boys, you'll find yourself back in here before you ever get a chance to tell (much less show) your mother how much she means to you. We think you owe her more than that!

Where

Where did you come from?

Where did you go?

Will you come back? Or don't you know?
Or will you get scared and keep runnin' away?

You can shake 'em or fake 'em
them feelings inside
If you could just stop runnin'

I can be by yo' side

Forever your lady, you forever my man
for the rest of my life or until the world ends, boo

I'll love you, you'll see that you can't hide
Yo, these feelings are memories of moments
that are lost in time

The sooner you realize the better I'll be
and my love will always be here for you boo from me

I love you forever, my heart and soul

And I refuse to let you go

And that's for real

-Jeannie M GU

From The Beat: Well, it is a great feeling to be so in love that you're sure it's a match made in heaven that will withstand the test of time. Of course, only time will test that belief. But we do want to ask this question: Even if he stopped running, how could you be by his side as long as you're locked up? Don't you have to do some work on your own life story before you can ask him to change his?

This Pretty Girl

Beautiful smile, I like that in a girl

Only seen you a couple times but you seem to already
rock my world

Roses may be red violets may be blue

But you're a fine chica and I want you

Your caramel skin got me hypnotized

And for the first time in my life I'm mesmerized

If I could hold and kiss you I would

If I could just talk to you I could

I want you in my life, I hope you do too

Anything you want form me I'll give it to you

A fine sweet girl for a down cholo to love

It's like God sent me an angel from above

When I go to my room you're the one I truly miss

What I'm really tryna say is if you want me like I want you

I hope I can get an answer next time I see you.

-Lil' Shadow B4

From The Beat: Have we got this right? You want to hook up with this girl, "an angel from heaven above," even though you know absolutely nothing about her beyond what she looks like? Does what she looks like inside count for anything? When you think about the perfect mate for you, are you considering only the outside of things, or do interiors also matter?

A Couple Hours

If I was to have a couple hours of freedom, I just go home and be with my Family Bam and see my girl.

-J-Biggs B4

From The Beat: And what would you do with your family? Is this all you could produce in a one-hour workshop?

Unconditional Love

My mom has shown me unconditional love and I never knew what it was

The hate I thought she had it was just a mom thing

But you know it was unconditional love

Even though things got tough she still showed unconditional love

But now the tables must turn; it's my turn to show unconditional love

-Jennifer

From The Beat: How did you mistake her love for something else? Why is it your turn to give back the love you now know you received? How are you planning to show that love?

I Have One More Chance

What s'up to all The Beat Within?

Is me again, Slow Jambbie. Well, I'm going to talk to you about what happened to me in court. On Monday I was threatened with CYA because I got a bad report. I'm guilty of it, too. I was behaving wrong in Log Cabin Ranch, but now that I know I have that, I have one month to change, I'm going to do it. I'm going to prove to the staffs that I am going to change, I'm going to change for my family, my girlfriend, and to myself, 'cause I need to change.

Change is good to everybody, so pray for me. Pray for me to change. God will help me and I won't never give up. Peace out. Much love.

-Slow Jambbie LCBS

From The Beat: You don't write what went down at the Ranch that has caused you to be threatened to be sent to CYA, but whatever it is, you already know not to get in that or any other mess down there again. Can you just stay calm and out of everybody else's business, just like all the other guys down there have to? Just do your program. Don't you think another real challenge for you is going to be when you get out again? What will you have to start or stop doing in the streets, to keep yourself safe and your freedom secure? Do that, too!

My Happy Place

My happy place

Is at my girl's mom's crib in Chinatown

Eating hellas foods

I thought was nasty!

Hella home-cooked food

Moms be throwin' down in the kitchen

When she bring pizza home

She make me eat the crust, though

'Cause it's healthy!

Making everybody laugh in the crib

Lil' sis

Man, I miss the crib and the fam

Playin' hella games wit' my girl

On the box for hours

Music bumpin' low

Moms tossin' us dough

I be, like, "Now, Moms!

I don't need that!"

She insist, though

Speaking great English

Even though her native tongue

Another language

But I understand her completely

That's my happy place, man!

The place I'm accepted at!

The place where I feel good about myself

For all the wrongs I've done

That I do

Rewarded for my accomplishments

Given a family

To share my joy!

Me and my girl

Together in the crib

Away from everything

Eight stories away from the harsh realities

We face 24/7

I miss the crib

Word up!

-B Littles LCBS

From The Beat: You sound like you consider your lady's family your family now. It's great that you have a family who accepts you completely. What's happened with your birth family? When you get out again, can you not mess up any more and make things better with them? Show them they can trust you and your judgment? You've written beautifully about your lady's family. They must be good people!

Everybody Knows Fat Thug

What I miss the most is my family and my money and my little brothers. I miss the block sometimes. I miss school and my job. My name Fat Thug. Everybody know the thug. I love y'all little brothers. Love Fat Thug always.

-Fat Thug B5

From The Beat: You're right, Fat Thug. Everybody knows you, including the police. So why not avoid those situations that you know the police can put you away for? Time to make some changes, Fat Thug!

Two Hours Of freedom

I would go out and eat a bunch of food. Then I would stop and go to all my family. Then I would go and chill with my best friends and talk to my girl, and we going to do what we do.

-George B2

From The Beat: We're glad to see that know who and what is worth your time. Just reflect on this train of thought so that you do what you need to in order to get back with your family and to stay with them.

You can shake 'em or fake 'em

them feelings inside

If you could just stop runnin'

I can be by yo' side

Watch You Glisten

I always told you

You looked cute in everything you wear

I would watch how you walked

And I would speak out my thoughts

Something told me that I shouldn't be shy

Yeah, you're sweet and beautiful

But you're just another female

Watching you, Jeannie

Walk through the sprinkler

So I can see your legs glisten

As the sun hits the drops

There's no way I can miss them

Just as you thought

You got my attention

As I walk in your direction

You got your perfect intention

Jeannie, I love you

Forever and ever

-Young Harlem LCBS

From The Beat: Sweet, beautiful, poem. The way you describe how this lady looks when she walks through the sprinkler shows us that you have the heart of a poet. Why do you include the phrase "but you're just another female"? Are you trying to tell her that although she has touched your heart, she's not really all that? If not, why would you put that in your tender poem?

Trying To Stay Isolated And Out Of Trouble

What it do, Beat? This be that ninja, Young Jeff, up here in tha Ranch, ya mean? It's coo' up here. I'm just tryna be coo', do my program, and go home. I already got eleven weeks dead time, but I'm tryna get my mind right while I'm up here, tryin' to isolate myself from all negativity.

-Young Jeff LCRS

From The Beat: We're sorry you got so much dead time so quickly, but it seems like you've already learned how to manage down at the Ranch, stay cool, do your program, so you can get out as soon as possible, so that's all good. You're right, the best thing you can do is stay to yourself and out of anybody else's business.

The Door To A Positive Life

A door to a positive life
Is what everyone wants
But can't seem to find
Or is it that we run and hide
From what we really want in life?
It's hard at times to get by
But in this city
Only the strong survive
Keep your head up.

To everyone locked up, just remember you got the key to the door of a positive life.
That's just if you want it. Well, I'm let the pen rest and let everyone tell it next.

-Lil' R LCRS

From The Beat: Why would anyone run and hide from what he or she really wants in life? Do you think it's possible people are afraid to achieve what they imagine their dreams are? What about you? Can you feel that something is keeping you from your loved ones, your goals? What are your dreams? How can you work around anybody or any thing in your way of achieving them? What's keeping you strong down at the?

Almost Home With You

Every day and night all I do is think about what we are going to be doing to keep me out of jail, Baby, and it is not going to be easy to do, but, Baby, I have to do it and it makes me happy to know that I am getting out in three weeks. Baby, we goin' make it. We goin' make it and, Honey, I've been missing you and cannot wait to kiss you and hug you.

-Young Money LCRS

From The Beat: Congratulations on almost completing your program and getting off the Ranch. You deserve your freedom. We hope your lady, school, your family all will keep you from any temptation you might encounter and keep you free! Best of luck.

Your Happy Place

This is The Beat Within...
If I had freedom or a happy place,
this place I wouldn't be in.
I'm all-out and all-in so would you forgive my sins?
If so, place me back with my family and friends,
'cause this place ain't a jail, more like a hell...
Myself got me here... health-wise I ain't well.
I'm sick, so sick I don't listen to shhh.
If I left 15 minutes earlier, I wouldn't have got pinched.
I would be in the house getting ready for bed instead.
I'm here locked up with these lyrics in my head.

-Wheazie Wop B4

From The Beat: Woulda, coulda, shoulda.../If only I was as wise as the Buddha/A quarter hour this way, a quarter hour that/Wouldn't make a difference, that's not where it's at/There's only one way to avoid that pinch/And that's to give them no rope to hang you, not even an inch/Getting back with family and friends is almost a given/It's what you do after that which will determine how you're gonna be livin'!

Baby, You

Baby, you make me feel good
Baby, you is my life
Baby, you make life
Baby, you is my heart and soul

-Lil' Man LCRS

From The Beat: Your baby sounds amazing. She must be a good lady. How do you impress/affect her? Do you help her feel safe? Good? Happy? We hope so.

You Can

You can be my wife
You can be my life
You can keep me alive
You can love me
You can be with me for life

-Lil' Man LCRS

From The Beat: Sweet, romantic poem. You surprise us with your poetic heart. We hope this lady feels the same way about you!

I Don't Know Why This Person Lie

Why do you lie to me?

Why do you tell me to do something, but you do the things you tell me not to do?

Why are you telling me one thing and get me confused?

Why can't I tell you on the phone that I love you and hear your voice?

Why is everything I do something wrong in your eyes?

Why am I in here messing around and not being able to take care of you?

Why am I locked up and can't see you and show you that I really love you?

But, Baby, I love you and that is why I am glad I mess with a girl, who is you

But, Baby, I love you forever and ever

Love you and our son

Love you, Baby

-Young Harlem LCRS

From The Beat: What a tender, sad love poem to her. Keeping a relationship together is hard enough when you're both on the outs, but sustaining one when you're both incarcerated is really tricky. When you're both free again, we hope you can take it slowly, get to know each other again, and be together with your son. Who is taking care of him while you're both inside? Will both of you be able to think about him and not mess up when you're home again?

We All We Got

What it is? What it do, Beat? This be Young Jeff. I ain't gotta say where I'm from—you ninjas and females know, but, yeah, man, I'm up here at tha Ranch. I'm doin' good now, but at times I sit down an' think about hella shhh, like my life and bangin' and all that shhh.

Sometimes I think about my homies Montee, Ant, Key Lee, Boo Bang and some other people that was really feelin' the thug life, and just thinkin', like, how my homies really gone. I mean, they probably got shot, but they not dead. I miss my ninjas and here at the Ranch. It's hard for real, 'cause the homies got killed. I have my homie up here, keepin' my mind right, so I'm a leave all the shhh on the streets.

-Young Jeff LCRS

From The Beat: Is it lonely and/or scary to think that all your homies and you have is each other? It's wonderful that you have homies who you trust almost like family, but what about the rest of the world? Do you ever reach out for the rest of us? Just like in your neighborhood, there are people out here you can love, respect, and who will be loyal to you, and others you can't. But why cut off the outside world? Why not give everybody a chance to let you know who they are?

My Happy Place

My happy place is at home in Kihei, Maui at my house in my room. It does have music playing in the my room there isn't a lot happening in the room. It's just relax and listen to music. I'm there most of the time. If I'm not there, I'm at my friend's house. My happy place has a Playstation 2 with a loud radio with a comfortable bed and last but not least my dad and my mom.

-Ben B4

From The Beat: Why in the world did you give up Kihei, Maui for this place? We have been to Kihei, and if we lived there, our happy place would be out in the water swimming with the turtles. We don't think we'd ever touch a Playstation if we had Hawaii's waters to play in. Are you planning to go back? What will you do to stay out of places like this?

I Miss

I miss when we used to play hide and seek
And when what you said could never make me weak
I miss when kisses on the cheek meant nothing
You know I kept those roses you gave me, I don't care if they're rotting
I wish we could have meaningless sleepovers again
Now you go out for days, I be wondering where you been
It started with sharing pencils and art
Now you possess my life, my love, my heart.

-Mousie GU

From The Beat: Whoever this person is, it's obvious he or she has been in your life for a very long time. Weren't those days of hide and seek innocent and easy? What will your future relationship with this person be?

I'm all-out and all-in so
would you forgive my sins?
If so, place me back with
my family and friends

I Am

I am a nice man
I am a fine man
I am a daddy
I am a funny man

-Lil' Man LCRS

From The Beat: That's true. You are a very nice young man. And you are always very funny, even when you mess with other guys down at the Ranch, bugging them. You have a good heart. Now work on bettering yourself and getting yourself up out of the system!

Two Weeks And A Few Days

It's been two weeks and a few days since I've seen my hyna, and all because of the system. Hopefully, I'll be out soon. All I can think of in here is my hyna. Alrato.

-Felipe
From The Beat: "And all because of the system...." you say. Are you telling us your behavior had nothing to do with it? Could be. Sometimes the innocent get swept up, but not usually. Maybe you should reflect more on the circumstances that brought you to the hall, which in turn has kept you away from your friends.

To The First Rose On Earth: A Proposal

You are the love of my life. I want to tell you that.

I want to hold you so tight,
hold you higher than the never ending sky.
I want to be with you, right by your side,
so I can stop this cry inside.

I only want to ask you one thing.
Do you want to be my wife?

-Diego

From The Beat: As a general rule, we are not to keen on printing love letters. But this one is pretty darn serious. And we're in a soft mood. We hope you're ready for a commitment like that, if she says 'yes'.

Another Day, Another...

As I gaze upon the trees glistening gold and yellow in the warm afternoon sun, I think to myself, another day, another vandana.

I feel there will always be me pushing a giant boulder up a hill. But when I was looking at those trees I realized I wasn't looking far enough. So my eyes fell onto the soft light and it hit me like a shotgun shell: perseverance is essential to my well-being. I will make it.

-Thinking

From The Beat: Perseverance is definitely essential. But it also matters what you persevere at. So, set the right goals and stick with it. You will make it.

An Idea

I had the idea of doing comedy with music and putting a ghost on fire. And there'd be a wolf, trying to drink milk. I regret this because the joke isn't funny.

-Rene'

From The Beat: But telling us about it is. We're wondering what the kindling point of a ghost is. And where you'll find that wolf.

I'm Trying

Well, two days ago I found out what is going to happen to me. I guess they want me to go to a program called Lodge Makers, down by L.A. I'm going to try to get six months court commit, instead of that. But if not, I'm going to try my best to graduate my program so I can get home & off probation, for good. Pray for me.

-Mike

From The Beat: OK, we will think good thoughts for you. But you've heard the old saying: God helps those who help themselves. You have a lot of work to do. Start this very minute, if you haven't begun yet.

I'm Back

Well, I'm back in Santa Cruz again. I just got transferred after my short stay up in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. I'm just awaiting my disposition. Damn it, I don't know what's gonna happen. Maybe ranch, hopefully, six-month placement. Well, it's good to be back in Santa Cruz. Wish me luck.

-Mike

From The Beat: We do wish you luck. And we wish you'd get some faith in yourself. We know that you are a smart fellow. And that you've done some dumb things. We're waiting for you to get serious about your life and to start using that big brain you've been gifted with.

What Makes Me Stronger

What makes me stronger is having my baby and trying to get out to be with him and my family. And to change and be a different person. That has to make me stronger.

-Rene'

From The Beat: Those are good reasons and we hope you get out soon. Your son needs you.

Not Much To Say

Well, I don't have much to say. I'll just say this. I miss my family and I love them, a lot. I feel like everything around me is some board game. I can't 'til I see my family again. Later...

-Diego

From The Beat: But do you know the rules to that board game?

I don't have much to say. I'll just say this. I miss my family and I love them, a lot.

Good News

I got some good news for you. I got my deal. I am going to a group home for 18 months. But if I do good, I do nine-months. I just hope to leave soon to do my time and see my baby when I get out.

-Rene'

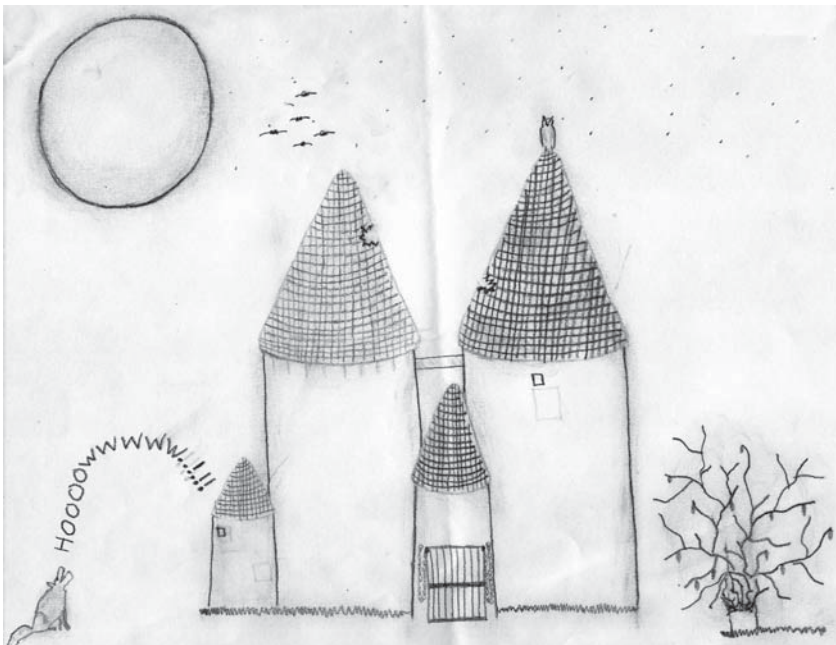
From The Beat: We're very glad you got what you were hoping for. We know you've learned a lesson. Please keep in touch with us.

In The Way

Something's in my life that gets in my way: drugs. Those drugs I call ladies are Crystal, Yolanda and Mary Jane. They've got me in some trouble that I can't get out of easy.

-M

From The Beat: Maybe it won't be easy, but you do need to leave those ladies behind. Some of them are just plain mean. They'd ruin your life without a thought. So ask for some help, and make new friends.



Missing Love

Baby I love you soooo much
 Damn, there's so much I want to say
 The way you make me feel and how much I think about you each and every day..
 'Time is goin' by so slowly but my tears are comin' out so fast
 Everyone knows that I love you and I know that me and you can make it last
 I have faith in us baby, all you have to do is just believe
 I want you to be a part of my future
 I wanna be able to feel your sweet kisses all over my body
 Ok, maybe I'm getting a little too into it
 But this is really what I feel
 But me and you baby can make it 'cause baby this is real

-Lil' Skizz

From The Beat: This is probably the last love piece we publish from you, Lil' Skizz. To be honest, we're bored by them. They are personal notes that teach nothing beyond the fact that you're in love. So? Can you tie this love to some future actions or behavior? Can you show how love can help (or hurt) you in your struggle with addiction? Can you give us something that takes this out of the realm of the personal and into the realm of general importance and significance? That's what The Beat Within is for.

All The Tears Of Sadness

I'm sittin here strugglin', my T-shirt full of tears
 I really don't want to lose you, and that is one of my biggest fears
 As I cry at night I pray that you are ok
 God? please help me, guide me, and lead me the right way
 There is a lot going on right now, I need you here with me
 I know that you support me
 But I need to know that you really love me
 You tell me that you do, but one thing I need you to know
 Is that I really need you
 And can't be without you
 Baby I love you!

-Lil' Skizz

From The Beat: If you get nothing else out of PSK, we hope you learn to rely on yourself and to see that you do not need a drug to be complete and you do not need whoever this poem is addressed to. We hope you learn that you CAN be without this person, even if you do love him or her. You are still looking outside yourself for fulfillment, and you have to start by looking inward.

Missing My Childhood

What I miss the most about is when my dad used to call me his little girl until I started doing stuff that he didn't want me to do. But I did it anyways. I did what I wanted to do and nobody stopped me except the "PoPos" "if" they caught me — "if" is they key word, you dig.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: So, you gave up your father's praises for drugs? That's too bad. We hope you regain his respect by acting respectfully. By the way, Kameko, The Beat likes it much more if you take just one of these topics and write a lot more about it. When you choose all three topics to write about, all you can manage is one or two sentences about each. Next time, show us what you can do by addressing a single topic.

Another Day

In this world so lonely and cold
 You can't trust nobody
 Doin' your own thing
 Strugglin' in this one life
 And one chance we got to survive
 Hella gang fights goin' down on the block
 Lil' boys and girls with weapons in they back pockets
 They gotta protect theyself
 Too many people hustlin'
 Tryin' to take care of they families
 Thinkin' it's the right thing to do
 I know that I went through shhh
 I know that everything in this poem is true
 You know a lil' piece of my life
 I know you thinking
 What's this gon do for you
 But the only thing that I know is
 I got some shhh to get straight
 I've been locked up too many times
 Now I got some business to do

-Lil' Skizz

From The Beat: We hope that the "business" you have to do is getting yourself together, confronting your problems and addictions squarely, and putting your life back together. Any other "business" is likely to lead you down roads with bad endings.

Two Hours Of Freedom

I would go out and have fun and go see my best friend to throw a party, and invite hella people. Then I would call my ex-boyfriend and bump and grind.

All night!

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: Obviously, your family means a lot to you. You didn't find one minute of two hours to squeeze them in...

Lost Innocence

My childhood was never bad. I had a great childhood. But now that I look back, what I miss most would be how I was so innocent and everything was so simple.

When I was so young, like five or six years old, everything was so easy. It's just such a simple time and no one was mean. I had no idea how people take advantage of others, how others hurt you to get joy, and how drugs can take over their lives.

Everything was so simple, and now it's confusing and difficult. I wish I could go back and change it all but I can't. So, to miss one thing, it would be how I miss the innocence of childhood.

-Ashlynd

From The Beat: The desire to go back to those easy, innocent days of childhood is something we all wish for from time to time. Adulthood is not easy. It requires a lot of responsibility and many decisions — and a knowledge of the world that we sometimes wish we didn't have. But it also brings the freedom to make our own choices, the potential for expanding our base of knowledge and experience, the possibilities of work and family. And, since none of us can go back, our only choice is to go forward. Of course, going forward doesn't guarantee our destination. There are many paths that move us forward. Some end better than others...

Without You

I was really pissed off today just thinking 'bout how long I gotta be here. I've been hella missin' you. Not bein' able to talk to you or write to you is makin me hate it. I rally don't want to be here.

I'm tryin' really hard to do good in my program, but without you it seems like I can't do it. Baby, I'm really worried. I love you with all my heart. Just promise me one thing — that no matter what, we will never be apart...!

-Lil' Skizz

From The Beat: Well, the problem is, you and your love are apart, and that's because you made certain choices. So when you say, "I love you with all my heart," we have to ask if there wasn't something else you loved even more? Here's the problem we're having with this piece... when you say, "without you it seems like I can't do it," you're already under the spell of another just as much as if you were under the spell of crystal meth. When you were using, you could have said, "without you it seems like I can't do it." Now you see that you can do it. Love can be just as controlling as a drug. The goal for you is to realize you can do it, and you can do it on your own. Once you realize that you must learn to depend on yourself, and that you can depend on yourself, you will be able to love and be loved without becoming dependent again.

The Question

The question of my heart, the heartbreak question is why it happen. Will I ever move on and find someone true? The question is there, miss, right out there. These questions we never know?

-Doloris

From The Beat: We bet you will learn the answer to at least one of these questions... which is the question of ever finding someone true. You will...

Happy Place

My happy place is by myself in my room because I can think without anybody bothering me. I can think about the things I did and think if I should do it again

So that's my happy place

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: Is there a real place where you go to find this quiet peace? When you think if you should do it again or not, what goes through your mind?

My Happy Place

My happy place might seem kinda normal to some people, but it's some place I would like to be. I would go to a nice quiet place just to get away from drama and a lot of loud things. I would be with my brother and my best friend because they're the ones I would want to be with for awhile. Most likely we would be at a park and be playing baseball and soccer.

After a few hours of being in that happy place, I would go with my brother and best friend to my family's house and grub and listen to music. That's a lot of things I miss doing, so that would be my happy place!

-Maile

From The Beat: It does sound like a happy place, Maile. What would you and your family eat when you all get together? What do you and your brother like to do? What do you usually talk about? When will you get back to this happy place — and how do you plan to keep it once you get there?

Forgiving Myself

The memory I miss the most of when I was a youngsta was my daddy. As I got older, my dad started pushing away from me and my moms. that's dummy messed up, but you know everything happens for a reason. But while I'm in this program, I'm getting in contact with my dad's side of the family. I'm not tryin' to see him, I just wanna see the family, real talk. I still have room for forgiveness, but I gotta forgive myself first.

-Lil' Zillah

From The Beat: We want to congratulate you for keeping a relationship with your dad's family, even if he took himself (partially) out of the picture. We don't know what he was going through when he pulled away from you and your mom, but we bet it was something that he felt he couldn't talk about or deal with. You have had your own experiences with things you didn't feel like you could talk about or deal with, so forgiving him may be easier than you realize. We hope your interaction with his family leads to a reconciliation between the two of you. This may sound strange to you, but we think he needs you in his life, even if he doesn't even know it. Good luck.

I Cry Every Night

C.O.: Ramirez last two? Forty-four!
KO: Damn, you hit mail again dogg!
CL: Yeah, it's from mom's, you know!
KO: Yeah I know!

Chorus (KO and CL):

Momma I cry every night, wondering why you don't write
Momma I cry every night, wondering why, wonder why,
wondering why!

Verse One (KO):

Momma a letter will make the time go better
This is the fifth time I wrote you this letter
Why don't you ever write back
Momma please just cut me some slack
You know I kick it with thugs, ditching and dodging da slugs
I've turned to drugs to replace your hugs...
I know that you're busy
But good God momma
You could take five minutes to say that you miss me
Every time I call and you don't answer da phone
I think I love you and wish I could be home
Momma I know that times are hard
I'm asking for a letter — no, a postcard
I could understand if you worked and took care of some
rugrats
But momma you don't do any of that
As those tears shed down my cheeks
Don't trip momma I'll wait for next week

Chorus (KO and CL):

Verse Two (KO):

Momma I cry every night
Wondering why you don't write
If loving you is right I don't want to go wrong
I'm trying to hold this love strong but it's hard to hold on
Is it that you don't want no convo' to go on
A piece of paper, a stamp, and envelope
If you can't handle that there is no hope
Are you hurt, sad, or just straight out mad
'Cause momma I'm ready to whack the mailman
Even if you're feeling a little bit bent
Good God momma a stamp cost only thirty-nine cents
Asking a homie for a soup just so I can eat
While you're out there ripping and running the street...
Selling dope so I could have a TV
Too bad you can't look in these eyes and see the real me
Damn momma don't you know hate's a sin
Damn, they just past my cell again

KNOCK-OUT

Everyone needs someone to lean on. Whether it's a young man who's incarcerated with shattered hopes of a mother sending a simple letter, to a sister who just had a miscarriage. This next outstanding lyricist and great thinker hits us with three pieces that deal with the raw fact that everyone needs to feel supported. First, he writes a rap calling out to his mother to show him some love in his time of turmoil. His friend features on it and you'll see that they are very talented. Then he writes a piece about 'Ma's Kitchen' bringing to life how she ran her household and it doesn't sound so homely to us. He reveals his concern and compassion in his last poem as he concludes with a dedication to his sister who just had a miscarriage and needed his support. What a way to make your presence be known in The Beat. You truly are a gift... Keep up the great thoughts and if it helps we'd love to hear more from you... He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

Don't Trip

I know you may think times are ruff
But this miscarriage won't make you weak but tuff
You're a good person so don't get yourself down
Dust yourself off and look around
The world still has a lot of happiness
Just know your unborn child is in heaven looking down on
us sis
If you ever feel like a part of you is gone
Just remember I'm a pillar you can lean on
So if there's the slightest amount of pain
Look towards heaven and pray for some soul cleansing
rain

Ma's Kitchen

I remember the punishment for breaking something in Ma's kitchen and the warden yelling: what did you break! I'd never answer knowing I was guilty; accident or not the warden would make me pay the price.

Ma didn't care about benefit of the doubt, if you're there and it's broken, you did it, I could already feel the velocity of the nails being driven into my coffin, the warden was no joke, she was the keeper of the grounds and everything in them was hers so I'd rake up the mess and wait.

Sometime my brother was my accomplice. I'd burrow into the nearest room and show up later with my criminal mask on, better him than me when it comes to survival it's all good in Ma's kitchen!

W Damn, this is so sad it brings tears to our eyes... damn, look how much we've failed our children when they're not even old enough to buy cigarettes, but already they want to commit suicide. We first met this beautiful young woman in our workshops down in East Palo Alto where we used to visit the Charter School every Thursday. Now she's moved on to high school, and as you'll read, she's going through her deal of problems, which surprises us because in our workshops she was always the most attentive and is extremely talented. In fact, she's a major reason why we miss those workshops so much. Anyhow, we're going to contact her old school and send her a letter because we are truly concerned about her. A wise man once said, "Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem." It's particularly hard for young people to see that this moment in their lives is just that — a single moment — and that things will not always be as they seem today. We know her life will be filled with friends and love and accomplishments, if she can just get through the trough she's in now. Please keep your head up as high as you can, W. And if you need someone to talk to, you can always call or write us.

A Day In My Shoes

You wouldn't last a day in my shoes. On the outside I look like a tomboy with A's and B's and friends. I'm not popular which is... awkward. On the inside I got my problems. I feel like committing suicide but I think I won't go to heaven. I feel like running away, but where to go. I feel like leaving this place so no one will remember me, but will they? All around I see strangers. I think who are they and who am I? Do I know them? This person I know told me it's okay

to cry. She's been thru the same thang — you know, being harassed. I felt like I knew her 'cause I felt her pain. I call her my guardian angel. She's actually a teacher in school when I had street soldiers. I hope to see her real soon and I need her now more than ever.

If you were in my shoes you'd have to choose the boy who loves you or the boy that you love. The thing about the boy you love is that he knows how you feel but he never calls you, says hi and he gives excuses for everything. If you can't come up of a picture of me think of a girl with short hair, skinny but not too skinny, baggy clothes, no make-up, hangs with the boys, get A's, smart but not nerd, gets pushed around, has to deal with parents who fight, had to live in a world of strangers and if she leaves somewhere or runs away no one would care. She needs the boy she loves with her but he's not there. Nobody loves her and she has to deal with all that everyday 24/7.

Still can't see her? Try seeing a kid who wants to commit suicide, has no friends and nobody wants her. It's like wanting attention but being invisible. Look all happy but I'm not. That's me. Hard to believe all this isn't even half of my life. It's one event out of the billions. I see a counselor who in my opinion doesn't understand me, no one does. Is there hope for me or is this the end? I'm just a teen. Will anyone ever listen to me. Help me someone. I'm known as W to my friends and this is me...

LAZY BOY Damn, we hate hearing about people being bad parents. Especially when those people aren't even the biological parents. A child soaks up everything and usually reflects it later on in life through their personalities. They say, "Hurt people, hurt people." And that couldn't ring more true as it does for this next writer. He's writing from San Luis Obispo County Jail in San Luis Obispo, CA. And while we read the poems following his touching letter, we clench our fists with anger and tighten our jaws with empathy. How could a man be so torturous to a child? How could anyone be so heartless? And we bet these factors weren't talked about when they sentenced the writer to do his time. What should someone do if all they know is violence and horror? Grow up and become the next Pope? We all have a responsibility to any child near us to nurture that child as best we can because they're innocent until they're old enough to know what innocent and guilty is. If we don't prepare our children, they are going to be lost when it comes time to stand on their own two feet. Well, as for the next writer, we hope the healing has started because we'd like to hear more from you very soon. We can see that you'll fit right in, here at The Beat. We appreciate all that you shared and think you absolutely have the talent to express yourself on paper. Beware... here's another Beat superstar in the making...

Dear Beat

I like hearing the poetry and personal stories. When I read The Beat it takes me to a whole new place like I'm not even in jail. It's my little escape from livin' on the inside. I often find lots of pieces that I can relate to and I feel where the writer is coming from. Something that first turned me on to The Beat was the artwork. I don't see much of it these days so if I were to request something from The Beat. I would like to see more art pieces because like the poetry and stories art pieces can say so much without words even being present.

I also like The Beat because it's a constant reminder every time I open the magazine that there is some like me whose been through some of what I've been through and can understand and feel where I'm coming from. As for how I got involved in the system I was born into it. I was given up, me and my bro James, when I was 11/2 years old and my bro just a baby.

My real mom gave me and my bro up because she was having hard times. I think drugs played a role in it and I guess her lifestyle wasn't made to have two children. So me and my lil bro were taken in as foster children by David and Linda Martinez, we grew up in Bakersfield, California, up until about ten years old. Those were the worst years of my life. I often think of that time period as non-existent. So I had no childhood until I was 10, I grew up with David (my foster dad) hating me why that's a good question what I only can see being a possibility is when me and my bro were real little my biological dad tried to go to court to get me back but for some reason we didn't want my lil' bro James, so that's when I think my dad took it upon himself to treat James like freakin' royalty.

He always had everything, always got his way most of the time was just straight up treated better than me, I got the complete opposite. It was torture, mind games, and all. At around my tenth b-day there was a lot going on in our family. My sis had a kid who the father she left and I guess he threatened to take her and my older bro was getting in some trouble with gangs in Bakersfield. So my parents were getting a little scared. Plus at that time my grandparents were either sick or just past away. So to be closer to my grandparents was other reason to move to the Central Coast. By age ten I was kicked out of and switched to another school in Bakersfield like thirteen times because as I was having problems with David (my foster dad) I was stubborn as hell and decided to get kicked out of school. Every time he hit me or whatever, I grew up with hate and pain for that man.

Anyways at ten I moved to Nipomo, Ca, made friends with people usually a few years older before I knew if alcohol and drugs took over one drug led to the next. I was always lookin' for a new more intense high, always testing the limits on how high I could get by how much of whatever drug I was abusing. Anyways growing up my mom (Linda) always some how ended up in the middle. I didn't realize because I was just like a lil' kid how much I was putting her through. Trip out, she was constantly in a battle between choosing her kid or her marriage. You would think that idiot (David) would figure that one out and not put her in that situation, but it was both of our faults even though I was a kid I still take responsibility for messing up her life a lil'. And for everything she's ever done and all that she's been through she's one of the strongest people I know and just like me she's a survivor.

Back to me, growing up at twelve years old I started getting locked up in the halls from there I failed programs such as diversion probation and home detention and switch back and forth between those programs until I was sent to a group home. I told probation

and the counselors in the halls from the start don't send me to a group home I'll just get kicked out of them until you send me home. Well, they didn't believe me so there I went again. I was kicked out of all the appropriate group homes in San Luis Obispo County, plus a few emergency foster homes that probation uses. They didn't listen and so I kept my promise to them and myself right before my last few placements in San Luis Obispo County. I was threatened by Judge Findley that I would go to California Youth Authority, but I didn't care. I figured with the way I grew up I would go to prison some day.

Anyways growing up all I wanted to be was gangster and I knew that prison would be a part of that so it didn't bother me being locked up. As I look back growing up I was such a lil' immature pain in the ass. So anyways after the placements in county ran out I was kicked out of California and sent to a place called Yerrington, Nevada to a bootcamp/boarding school by then I wasn't far from 18, so I played a little football and also joined their boxing team, and I went from 322 to 220 pounds! Naturally they worked my ass off there, but I had to keep my promise and after 1 1/2 years I was kicked out of there, by then I was 18. Judge finally retired, a new judge was on the bench. My probation was cancelled and everything after that was adult system.

Well, drugs, alcohol, gangs, and all of the above was back in my life at full throttle sending me on a collision course with rock bottom it's not like the drugs alcohol and gang ever left its just it was that much worse when I hit the streets. Well I hit the bottom hard, drugs almost took my life several times and one day I wake up here on my way to Wasco State Prison at 18 years old for a false bomb threat an assault with a deadly weapon (my chains) on another inmate with gang enhancement and whatever else they could stack on top of that. I ended up with 16 months with halftime, so I was happy because I was looking at years at first.

Anyways here is a few of my pieces that will help you understand me a lil' further. All my pieces are situations or events from my life. I hope The Beat and its readers get to catch a glimpse at life in my shoes. Peace out Beat...

The Present

I've shed so many tears saw the worst of anyone childhood years

It messed my mind up it really hurt me bad all I ever wanted was a real dad

It led to low self-esteem and insecurity I use to ask God why it had to be me

When I was little I don't like to say I was afraid I had patience and wanted revenge I would wait for the day

He did me wrong in so many ways I grew up wit too many rainy days was no way for a kid to be raised

Even it was negative I wanted his attention, anyways I hope he would change one day
Threw that harsh experience I've learned some things to be I'm ten times the man he ever was

I'll be better than the best father there ever was the strong one the dad he never was

My family will love me for eternity its good enough for me and all I will ever need

I've been through so much in such a short time I'm glad it all happened before 18 instead of 29

It's no wonder I led a life of crime joined a gang and started drugs at age thirteen
Mushrooms, opium, coke, and heroin, weed, sherm, and amphetamines pill popin' huffin' and drinking
Only kept me from killin' me they also made me who I be I've already been through 3 OD's and I've hit the bottom now it's up to me to change who I use to be

My future depends on me 'cause I'm the one and only key
I've tried hard tonight to spill my guts on the lines only truth you have been reading
I wrote this for you to better understand so write back soon, let me know what you think

My Feelings For David (Part One)

As I sit here on this late and lonely night and shed a
tear but too full of pride to cry

When I constantly keep my mind on why I choose to do this to my
life

Why I conspire to livin' a life of imprisonment and crime or givin'
into my past urges to die.

These are thoughts and questions that often float in my mind I've
experienced so much in such a short time I blame my father for
ruining my life

I know he played the biggest role in screwing up my mind, I just
wish I could confront him about why?

I think its because I'm ashamed of the things he did early in life

Can you really blame me for the way I sometimes look at life or the
thoughts I sometimes get in my screwed up mind

These are the things I think of on quiet night I often wish that he
would just die

So he can pay for the wrong doing and silent crimes accumulated
throughout his life

No doubt in my mind that God will make him suffer and pay some
day for his evil minded sick ways

I just wish justice would be served tonight a lil' sooner so I can get
on with my life

Some day he will pay for that twisted mind the hate I have for him
is so high

In my mind he has bruised and scared me for life and because he is
old I count the days til' he dies

I feel his death is justified by his sick mind that committed so many

LAZY BOY (CONT.)

unseen crimes

While my wrong doings are dealt with by incarceration time he runs
free with unheard crimes

I think justice will be served when I confront him then he serves
pen time or dies

After my confrontation whether he dies or serves jail time either
one to me is fine '

When his time comes I just wish to look into his eyes to see if his
hate for my life still resides

Knowing he will die with my forgiveness and mercy that I'm moving
on with my life

Someday I'll expose his sick mean ways I'm sure long before he
passes away and goes to hell for eternal life

Until then I have to deal with the hate, pain, and frustration I've
stacked and locked inside

For now it's locked up till I can release it without me extending my
life of incarceration time

This is why I sometimes break down and cry they wrongfully judge
me for feeling sorry for myself all the time
But they would change their minds if they only knew what I have
to live with inside

Only God has helped me deal with this man over time so I often pray
that God deal with him when its his turn to pay for his unpunished
crime

Now I have reason to strive for success in life
For me it's to be strong and try to better myself than the person I
despise

Growin' Up Bein' Tortured

My Childhood Of Pain (Part Two)
(Writer's Note: Only some of the stuff he did to help you
understand my hate for him.)

As he pulled my hair
Knocked on my head
And rubbed his knuckles on my head

He threw water at me
While I was sleeping in bed
And loved to throw things at me

He beat me wit his belt
Until I was bruised on my ass, legs, and back
Bruises lastin' always 1 or 2 weeks at least

He slapped me around
He liked to pinch my nose
And always called me names

He hit me with the fly swatter
Or the extension cord
Either one to him was great

He twisted my arms
Burned my fingers on the stove
He loved to punish me

He locked me outta the house
Left me in the backyard
Even tied me to a tree

Always standing in the corner
Facing the wall
Nose touching and no sitting

He hit me with sticks and boards
That he used for locking the windows wit'
And take all my things from me

Threw me outside
On the side of the house and
Sprayed me with the hose while I was naked and crying

He used to throw rocks
Or step on my toes
And shoot water guns at me

He once cut my hair
Told everyone I did it
Just to make fun of me

He picked me up by my underwear
Gave me wedgies and
Picked me up upside down by my feet

Put my hand in a mouse trap
Washed my mouth out wit' soap
And shot rubber bands at me

He took my blankets away
Made me wear a bag on my head
And put on a diaper like a baby

I had to use my hand instead of toilet paper
Drank hot sauce an eat JP (jalapeno peppers)
And told the school stuff to embarrass me

He refused to go by the schools
When I got kicked out
And told them to tell the cops to go get me

By the age of ten I was kicked out of fourteen schools
I was a pain in the ass at school
So they didn't give a damn about me

He put a match out on my arm
Hooked me up wit rope and cuffs

My childhood was always filled wit' that kinda stuff...
That's why I be the way I be

JAMES A person's true character shows when they're facing adversity, and this next writer is probably facing one of the scariest adversaries of all and that's time. When many years of your life are about to be taken away, it's very defeating depending on how you're looking at it. This next young man is in a juvenile hall somewhere south of San Francisco and at sixteen he's being forced to grow prematurely to deal with what will probably be the hardest thing he'll ever have to experience in life. However, as you read his piece, "Cursed And Blessed" you can tell that he's already putting his mind to work analyzing the situation and how he can perceive this as a lesson learned, which will be extremely difficult considering what he's facing. Him picking up a pencil and writing about it in itself is an amazing act of courage and shows how strong this young man really is. We're sure he's heard speeches about his behavior from a whole lot of people, so we don't want to do the same. We just want to let him know he'll always have a place within the pages of The Beat. Sometimes we can act as salvation for those who won't see the streets in a while. We can showcase your thoughts of redemption and remorse. And we will always be an ear for you to utilize in your journey through this dark experience. Thank you for sharing all that you did, and until next time...

Cursed And Blessed

As I'm sitting here tonight, in my lonely little cell, reflecting on my wrongfully adventurous life, I wonder where all my happiness went? I can't help but smile at the fact that I truly feel cursed and blessed at the same time.

I know this may sound a little weird coming from a person who will have to be in prison decades before they even consider letting him out, but if you just sit back and listen to what I have to say, maybe by the end of this piece you will have more of an understanding as to what I mean when I say I feel cursed and blessed at the same time.

Now, allow me to share with you some of the reasons why I should very rightfully feel cursed.

The first and biggest reason why I feel this way is because just as I was starting to see some light at the end of the tunnel, the D-A (District Attorney) last week told my Public Defender and I that he would be willing to offer a deal of 34 with two "L's." For obvious reasons I didn't even wanna smile at this "deal" but it turns out I never had the liberty to or not to take it from the starting. (Well not so much as not having the liberty, but more like my other options looking even more hopeless.)

If I would have taken it to trial and I would have won, even in the event where the whole jury would feel the sympathy, I still would have been left to do a sentence of 62 with one "L".

Now on the other hand if I would have lost which was more very likely to happen, the minimum I would have gotten would have been a sentence of 94 with 3 "L's".

Also it seems to be that the curse in this area has affected my brothers too. One of my carnalitos got 25 with one "L" and two of my others are waiting to be given something with one or many "L's."

I can't truthfully sit here and tell you that this curse is only on us because the system hates us, no homies, they don't hate us, they're just tired of seeing young Chicanos killing other young Chicanos over a street or park, that 20, 30, 40 years ago was where they could play "Hide-and-Go-Seek" with their neighbors without having to worry about being caught in the crossfire of a shootout between rival gang-members. So that's one reason why I feel cursed. Another reason is because as I'm confined to this little room for 23 hours of the day, I'm saddened and tormented when trying to pass time, I look at a magazine and I see a picture of a father and a son at the beach, or when I read about the duties of being father include changing soiled diapers or waking up in the night to tend your baby.

Now on the other hand if I would have lost which was more very likely to happen, the minimum I would have gotten would have been a sentence of 94 with 3 "L's".

You see the reason I feel this way is because right away I get to thinking of my own little man and how much I long to be there for him. I unfortunately never got to change my son's diapers out there (in the free world) because I was sadly locked up for a double murder when he was brought into this world. The next best thing I've gotten to changing his soiled diapers was when I had my mother bring another clean diaper for me to change the one he was wearing, just so I could know how to.

And as closest as we've gotten to the beach, well, sometimes I'll ask him if he wants to go to the beach with Papi (Daddy), and I regret it right away when it leaves my mouth, because it pains me so much when I see his face light up and say, "Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!"

I know that I brought this curse upon myself by choosing to put my pride and reputation first, but a curse is a curse and if anything it torments me more because I know that if I would have chose to live a productive life this curse would be non-existent.

Now as for why I feel blessed. Well, there are many little blessings that I'm now starting to recognize after being sentenced to what I was sentenced to, but tonight I will share two of my biggest blessings that truly have me feeling blessed.

The first reason or blessing is that although I'm not as close to Him as I should be, the Man above has allowed me to live for as long as I have so far. I could have been fatally wounded out there or even while being incarcerated, but so far the Lord has let me see many days and even though sometimes I just wanna leave this world to see if it will be better in the next. I am grateful that I am still breathing. This one also ties into the other reason I feel blessed, which is because although I'm held down by these walls when I see my little man at visits, unique happiness that I mostly only feel in his presence envelops my emotions. When I watch him throw his head back and laugh because he think the faces I'm making at him are funny, I can feel the chains of hate and anger that have bound me for the last seven years being lifted from my heart and kept off 'till I have to watch him go.

I feel blessed by knowing that I have someone who loves me unconditionally and will give me a hug whenever I ask for one. He's my little angel in disguise and he has changed my life, for the better, even though I find myself in the worst.

Well, now that I have broken it down for you, can you understand why I feel this way?

A lot of homies won't feel like this 'till later on in life. Because for the time being, you'll be taking your blessings for granted. But when your blessings run out and luck is all you got which never even seemed to be on your side in the first place, well then shoot homie, I guess we'll be dancing to the same song and wondering how you too, have gotten to a point in your life where you feel cursed and blessed...

Who will apologize for the mistreatment and humiliation I suffered as a prisoner?

Bush's Forgotten War On Terror

On September 9, 2006, I was walking down Sweetgum Street on my way to my room. It was early afternoon, hot and very humid, a typical Southeast Texas summer day. I was humming to myself my favorite tune by The Spinners, "I'll Be Around," when all of a sudden I felt a crash against the back of my head, along with the sound of shattering glass. Then came another crash, this time on the top of my head, again with shattering glass. I knew I was being hit. Then came the coup de grace, a forty oz. bottle against my right jaw.

I dropped to one knee, as I felt the flow of warm blood running from the tops of my head to the right side of my face. Instinctively, I started reaching in my right front pocket for my Buck knife, but had forgotten that I had earlier switched it to my left pocket. As I spun around trying to see who or what was attacking me, my head was spinning out of control. I tried to stand, but staggered and fell back down to one knee. I noticed that my right jaw was loose and moved on its own. I knew then that my jaw was broken, and I was in grave danger. The world was spinning before my eyes, and I couldn't get my bearings. I was being mugged, a surprise attack, and I was vulnerable; my life was in jeopardy.

As the spinning subsided, I turned to see who my assailants were and saw three men running away. I recognized all three: Slim, Red, and Baby Boy, local thugs who authorities now dub "Katrines" — those evacuees from New Orleans from Hurricane Katrina. These young men are responsible for a number of assaults, robberies, and possibly murders.

The fact that I did not go down completely and was reaching for a weapon may have been enough to scare them off, because typically in situations like that, muggers finish you off. Added to my good fortune is that it was daytime and occurred in the middle of a street near a busy intersection.

I needed help badly and knew it was imperative that I put some distance between me and my assailants before they decided to mount up for another round of attacks. I forced myself to my feet and began staggering toward the intersection, each step causing excruciating pain in my jaw. Directly across the street was a Fina store. As I crossed the intersection, I could hear people screaming, "Oh my God! He's bleeding! Hey, man are you all right?"

When I got to the store, still afraid that Slim and his cohorts were trailing me, perhaps with a gun this time, I locked the door behind me. The cashier screamed in terror when she saw the condition I was in. By then my broken jaw was causing me more pain than I had ever felt in my life. I muffled out the words for her to call 911 for an ambulance and the police. I begged her to not unlock the door for anyone else but the police. The pain in my jaw drove me to hysterics and I began knocking over boxes and punching at shelves, screaming out in pain. I wanted water but it hurt to swallow. I couldn't calm myself down. Each time the pain throbbed, I screamed in horror, as I tried to monitor the door to see who would arrive first, the police or Slim and crew. About five minutes later, the police and paramedics arrived to my relief.

I was transported to the closest local hospital, St. Elizabeth, handcuffed to the bed because of my hysteria. I requested Officer Dishler to accompany me in the ambulance. Dishler and I go back a long way and have developed a lot of

PAUL JAY REED

It's been a while since we had the pleasure of featuring Paul Reed in these pages. As you'll read below, he's been out of commission for a minute, unable to talk or even to eat! But he's talking now... about how the President's foreign "War on Terrorism" ignores the ongoing war on the streets of this country, and how the well-documented abuses of Iraqi and other prisoners at the hands of their American captors are nothing new to American imprisoned right here at home. Paul is still in Texas recovering from his assault and writing us from the best placement there is — freedom!

respect for each other. I was treated for head injuries at St. E, and ten staples were placed in my head. From there I was Life Flighted to UTMB (University of Texas Medical Branch) in Galveston. Once again, Dishler was there with me for the flight. A brace was placed on my neck to hold my jaw in place. Each time my jaw moved, the brace automatically reset it. I passed out from the pain! When I awakened, I was being moved into a private room in John Sealy Hospital — ironically, the very hospital where I was born 39 years ago.

Two days later, I underwent surgery. Two plates were installed, and my mouth was wired shut. Initially, I was placed on a liquid diet, but was later placed on a pure diet of mash potatoes, pudding, ice cream, and Ensure, whatever I could slurp through clenched teeth.

As with all indigent patients, I was promptly released from hospital care long before I was ready, with no definite place to go in Galveston. I was sent to stay at the Salvation Army Emergency Shelter until my next doctor's appointment two weeks later. I had no way of filling my prescriptions, and the Salvation Army wasn't equipped to deal with my diet, so I ended up on a juice and water fast. I lost over 20 lbs. in two weeks, and as a result of the antibiotics I received after surgery, I developed an infection in my colon (c-deficit). I am still recovering from both the fractured jaw and the infection today.

Yet, as I remember lying up in the hospital, watching the news, I couldn't help noticing the continued coverage and emphasis being placed on President Bush's War on Terrorism. This administration has concluded that the war on terrorism is about us against Al Qaida or any other force that threatens America's borders, while forgetting the terrorist acts that occur daily on America's streets. There is little difference between the attack on the World Trade Center in New York City and Timothy McVey's bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City and the assault I faced recently. What's more, as an ex-con who has spent years in America's prison system, I was insulted by Bush's apology for the mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners, while overlooking the daily mistreatment and violations of civil rights in our own penal system.

I wanted to pick up the hospital telephone and call George and inform him that I too have just been terrorized. I too have been maliciously mistreated as a prisoner. But how seriously would GW take an indigent Black man who is a part of the Head Count of American Poverty? Who will declare war on the terrorism I faced? Who will apologize for the mistreatment and humiliation I suffered as a prisoner?

Let's stop pretending that our greatest threats come from without. Bush was then governor of Texas when a Black man was dragged to death by two White men in Jasper, Texas. Bush's response was to rename a prison diagnostic unit after the victim as a token effort to honor him and appease Black Texans. It was the first prison unit to be named after a Black person, and we are so honored! Bush was also governor of Texas when the Supreme Court lifted the Ruiz stipulations that guaranteed the humane treatment of Texas prisoners. Therefore, if I look for empathy, it will not come from this administration.

It's not that I don't care about what's going on out there in the Middle East, but while lying in that hospital bed with my jaw wired shut, I didn't give a shhh how close we were to capturing Ben Laden; just find Slim and crew!

LITTLE COUSIN

Writing from a group home in Porterville, CA, we give you an old workshop participant and long time friend in Little Cousin. This week he tackles the idea of freedom and how much it means to him. And as he scorches in hundred plus degree weather, we can understand why he misses being out. Hopefully he'll gain the tools needed to get him out and help him be consistent in staying out. We'll patiently wait for updates but all we can do in the meantime is wish him the best. Only time will tell where this bright young man is headed.

Freedom

Freedom means that you can wear your own cloths and there is no wake up time. It is way better than jail because you can ride bikes and you can work and get money the right way and not get put in jail because you were selling drugs or robbing people who did nothing to you.

OBA FRELIMO

We know that when incarcerated people have many needs because they're restricted from doing things on their own. And The Beat does all it can, with very limited resources, to provide those needs to those people. But damn, as our old friend knows, we aren't the Make A Wish Foundation or The Oprah Winfrey show where we just have money to totally change someone's life around. This next OG writer, who we've learned to love from the onset, sadly has a list of needs longer than a Ted Bundy sentence. The pains of incarceration. What we do, and Oba knows this, is provide a platform to get your thoughts and feelings out, and we always appreciate Oba for doing that for us all this time, but we can't possibly make everything happen. So if you're reading this and know JT or San Quinn personally, please write this man, or us. He sounds like he's on a mission to be positive and though we'd love to assist him in doing that. He's writing from the California Correctional Facility in Tehachapi, CA.

Beat

Greetings, time has permitted me this opportunity to holler at you live and direct and touch basis with you, on the happenings on my end, in which, I hope to hear from you and be filled in on what's going on, on your end! So how have you been doing? How's the family? I send my love and respects to all. I extend my love and respect to all of The Beat! I wish everybody the best!

As for myself, at present, I am still on Tehachapi Mainline! I'm struggling to stay on top of my program! Not so much of a struggle to where I'm off balance, but the opposite, I'm functioning precisely on positive results. Every action must count for something towards getting me home! I've been waiting to hear from you! I have received The Beats though! Thank you! I do appreciate that! I've been waiting for the new contest to kick off, because, I need that hundred dollars for canteen! My limit is ninety dollars right now, and I need every bit of that ninety dollars for hygiene and writing material, and food!

I'm just getting outta that SHU, so I've got to re-establish myself; and survival kits! In which, I'm really praying I get a CD player soon. So we can have some music up in here, 'cause we're barely getting any yard! So that would be a great deal of stress off this situation! As well, I have a lot of free time on my hands and I want to write some stuff for you and

The place I'm at right now is called Porterville. It like a group home. It is real hot here. Today it was 106 and I mean the heat here is nothing compared to SF. I have been getting money left and right by working and man it's so nice here. O' my bad y'all, this is your boy Little Cousin from SF. But I'm in Porterville and man you all are missing out of your freedom. Trust me. I been in Juvenile for a year and three months and I was going crazy in there and man I started talking to staff about what's going on and they told me not to stress out about what's going on in the court room. All I did was leave it up to God. And he led me the way to freedom and look where it got me and I still write to you all in there a word of wisdom.

Keep your head up and do not let other people bring you down. So from someone who was locked up for a year plus, keep your head up and keep writing it The Beat Within. All right from your boy Little Cousin from Porterville.

all at The Beat. Yet I need some requests or topics to write on! Because I'm all tapped out! So, when you write do please throw some suggestions my way! I'd appreciate that!

I'm really needing some solid support from out there! Anybody willing to step up to the plate for me, I'd appreciate it! I need visits, books, stamps and envelopes, pictures, conversations and communication to the outside. Plus, just info on what's jumping off in The Bay, "The Hyphy Movement!" That's like foreign to us, that's the business, so I'm trying to get up on it, so I can relate to the changes in the Bay Area! Feel me?

Along with all that, I need somebody able to send me 1 or 2 packages a year! I ain't asking for much, just what little bit I'm allowed to have, that I'm unable to provide for myself right now! I did attempt to establish a means of my own funds, from my owns works, e.g. The book I wrote "A Player's Choice," Yet, one dropped the ball on that, and never got it published. So that assed me out, on accumulating wealth! Which I still have copies of the book in my locker! Along with that, I sat in the SHU, writing music! In which I was able to script three rap albums, 12-track C.D./tapes. And now I'm needing help from out there, to put my music out, so I need to contact J.T or San Quinn, so I can do that! But until then, I'm stuck in Limbo, hoping I'll be able to get consistent support and advocacy, till I'm able to do for myself. In which I know, you (The Beat) could be of assistance in facilitating, the ball rolling, towards those out there who wanna see me at my best, being active as my support group! Based on the fact, people may think or assume Oba is OK and being looked out for and not in need of anything! They need to know the truth! Especially if they don't have a problem looking out for me, from time to time! Because, it's been some instances where I was without hygiene and writing materials and that's a no, no! We need that to survive in jail! So Beat, any troops you can rally in my defense to lend a hand and give a cat some love! I'd appreciate it!

I'm gonna have to let you go, but I hope to hear from you soon! Get at me man, and throw some topics at me to write about, and when you can, shoot ya' boy a few books to read and a dictionary! I'd appreciate it! One love, take care man!

Peace out,

FATIMA WASHINGTON

Being a mom is probably the hardest job in the world because it entails all responsibility and no gratitude. So it's a pleasure when we get pieces dedicated to mothers. This one is a thank you poem written for a mother that sounds incredible. It's probably right on time and we hope she can get this issue to her mother and show her how much she truly cares. Thank you for being a good mother, we need more people out there like you. Her daughter's writing from the Central California Women Facility State Prison in Chowchilla, CA. Thanks again...

I Thank You Mommy

I thank you for all the things you done for me
 I thank you foe being by me even though times were hard

I thank you for believing in me when nobody else didn't

I thank you for listening when nobody else wouldn't

I thank you for caring when nobody else didn't
 I thank you for giving me whatever I wanted when I wanted

When things was hard for you
 I thank you for being you because you're everything a mom should be

I love you mommy.

Every action must count for something
 towards getting me home!

Practical Judgment

In other words,
Some people are digging their own graves by constantly
"sinning"
The world is always judging
Everything and everyone
Minds in a stun
Violent statements with hand on the gun!
Nevertheless,
I personally "don't agree" with those meaningless
crimes
In these ultra gloomy times!
Sadly the ones involving "God's" little angels or
innocent women
It's an evil omen!
If it was up to me, it would be a first strike law
With no flaw!
But still I must never "forget" what the world illustrates
"Judge not that you be not judged" as this poem will
indicate
The love and hate!
A simple suggestion
That we all need to apply the cutting edge of repentance
As a first lesson
Altogether, radically revise our whole idea of how right
we are
Or how wrong we are
In the end it will not be worth anything, anyway
All sinners will have to answer to God, he's the real
judge,
To punish or save, he has the say
Tomorrow and today!
On the other hand no demand
I am not preaching only speaking the truth with an
ending
All mortals are of the victory of Christ
And the reality of his kingdom in the world even now,
In all the confusion, the chaos, motive
And the risk of this historical and revolutionary time
and crisis
Which we call the atomic age in which we live
Ask Jesus to forgive
Understood
It's all good!

ALEX SHELTON One of our most favorite writers and artists is back on the scene after going a few weeks MIA. We've been waiting to hear some more from the mind that creates pictures with both words and pictures. This week he hits us with a poem about stressing and how it's momentous. Usually what we're stressing over is temporary and so our stress is only temporary. Maybe if we kept this in mind while we were stressing it would help us stress less, but who knows? He then closes with a poem about a judgment he has that many people will probably agree with hence the title, "Practical Judgment." We love getting mail from Alex. He writes from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA. We can't wait that long again as we almost fiend to know what goes on in the mind of Alex. Let's see if he captures you the same way he does us.

Momentous Stressing

Tossing and turning, yawning and yearning!
Stressing
Full blast every waking hour of the day and all hours
Of the night when
Souls should be asleep so I write this poem with a valid
Gesture, so peep!
As I erase, then rewrite and finally proofread
It's a non-stressful deed!
Walking around like a zombie
That's they philosophy!
Always sad, mad
It's all bad
Should be glad!
Seems like every moment we all think of right and wrong,
Commitments and evasions, sincerity or insincerity,
Maturity or immaturity,
Release or incarceration, friendship, relationship
Questions we do not want to face
As we try to impose an answer or sometimes slip!
Trying to change questions, with a stature
Our blood racing 100 miles an hour
Straight to the heart building high pressure!
"So stop stressing!"
And change the "thinking pattern" of negative thoughts
To good
"THOUGHTS"
Block out everything that can't be fixed from your mind and
"pray"
For your health and "blessings" along the way
Now I can say
The only medication I need is "God's Love", he helped me see
By reading, studying, memorizing scriptures, we all can be
"Stress Free"
Gradually and incrementally
Retire into sleep without weep
I pray for your soul to keep!

FRANK RAMOS Frank Ramos has an uncanny ability to set up the conditions of gang life, 'hood life that lead so many young people to jail and prison — and then to paint graphic verbal pictures of that reality (which very few of those young people truly understand until they are in it). But the picture he paints (entirely in rhyming verse) is not just to scare our readers "straight," it is to arrive at a profound question: What is the purpose of making choices you later regret, or living lives that too soon get abbreviated by the numbing experience of prison. So, Beat writer/ readers, to what purpose? Frank writes us from the Richard J. Donavan State Prison in San Diego, CA.

Purpose

I break this curse, with broken verbs, spoken word,
parables and riddles!...
From dusk till dawn, I bust and bomb, searching for an
escape...even if it's for a little!
I fiddle and faddle, rock like fraggle, my scrabble is unique!
Speak heart beats, bleed ink, every time pen and paper
meet!...
Defeat, monsters, ghouls and demons...leaving heathens,
screaming for respite....
But despite their cries and snivels my scribbles must
incite riots, fights, and wars...
I ignite fires that burn through doors...
My desire it unlike the norm,
And I'm unpredictable like a storm...
So if you want to dance, just bring the music!

Lock and load, we'll rock and roll, but don't confuse it...
There's a difference between being weak, meek,
courageous, or stupid!

Now to the topic, let me drop it on you all...
You say you keep it hyphy, you swear that you ball...
You say you got the blovck on lock, that you make more
moves then U-haul...

Well, that's all fine and dandy, until you come to prison
and they call you candy...
All dressed in drag like Ru-Paul! In ghetto warfare bridges
are quickly burned out...

Deep inflicted wounds causing goons to get turned out...
But you ain't hearing this, and you won't be feeling this,
Until the situations turn tragically serious...
Still I preach 'cause I've walked through streets that are
chalked...

Lived through wars that were fought for pride that was
taught,

By guys that are bought by lies and are not...
Able to see things clearly...
The blind lead the blind, and the weak lead the weary!
So I work this magic to break habits, and curses!
The only question we need to ask is what's the purpose...
Of making decisions then questioning if it was worth it!
We were all given but one life to live...
I live mine as a number... no wonder I give all that I've got
to give!

SIR TURTLE We haven't heard from this fine poet in quite some time... or maybe we have, but just haven't gotten around to his piece within our colossal stack yet. Well, whatever the case, here he is and this week he hits us with a little romance. 'Little Fawn Lady' is a rap to a woman who obviously is on this young man's mind. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. If you're into romance, then we suggest you keep reading this...

Little Fawn Lady

Chorus (Repeat Two Times):

Hey little fawn lady you look so beautiful and so damn fine,
I want you as my wife and if I can I'll be your king
As I make you mine!

Verse One:

When I first laid my eyes on you,
I knew at that moment that you were my dream come true.
Your eyes sparkle like billions and billions of stars in the sky,
Because of the things that you say
And the way you move has gotten me hypnotized.
Little fawn lady, you have the body of a goddess that makes all
goddesses look at themselves with shame,
But in this life I can tell that you don't play these silly games.
Little fawn lady, you fill all of my dreams,
And I know that this is what true love means.
At times in my dreams I wish I could hold you in my strong
embrace,
As we are laying next to each other
As I'm kissing your beautiful lovely face.
My little white fawn lady, love is a wonderful sensation,
And it's caused by a lot of sweet temptation.

(Repeat Chorus Two Times)

Verse Two:

Little white fawn lady, there are two kinds of beauty
And the first one is your outer appearance,
2nd is your caring, loving heart,
And because of that you have caught me from the very start.
Wishing that I can snuggle next to your shapely body
Together under the enchanting starlight,
As you surrender all your love to me
As we make our lovemaking so tight.
I feel this way vividly
Wanting to nestle my head upon your gorgeous breast,
Where I know I'll feel safe to rest.
Little white fawn lady,
I can think of all the times that I wish I could kiss your
beautiful lips,
As I'm grinding against your sexy body
As I am caressing your fine thick little hips.
You're more precious and beautiful than diamonds and pearls
In this life time,
There's nothing in this world that I rather have if you'll be
mine.

(Repeat Chorus Two Times)

Verse Three:

Little white fawn lady, my love for you is solid and very strong,
Because there's so many things I'll do for you that will never
be wrong.

People say that I'm so infatuated with you
They are so jealous of me and everything they say is not true.
Everything about you my little fawn lady is so lovely and
sweet,

They way you smile the way your eyes sparkle,
The way you lick your lips and move your hips
Has gotten my heart to stop and make my legs get weak.
There is this loneliness in my heart that's a constant fight,
But my little white fawn lady if you be my wife
Everything will be alright.

In my sleep I see visions of your lovely face and that beautiful
smile,

But in your sexy eyes all you see is my name and number
On a damn prison file.

Little white fawn lady will you be my wife?

(Repeat Chorus Two Times)

Verse Four:

Your skin is that of a creamy white glow,
And from all these romantic words that I say to you
Will continue to flow.

Little fawn lady, have you ever felt a cool breeze
Hit your precious heart

Like the wind was trying to blow it apart
Little white fawn lady

It's like that oldie song called 'These Tears Of Mine.'
Because of the day that we met you've been on my mind.

Little white fawn lady,
People say that roses are red and violets are blue,
But is it my fault that I'm so much in love with you?

Little white fawn lady,
I want to have all of your lovely attention,
So I can show you all of my affection,
Baby, if you get with me, I'll love you with all my heart
And I promise you that I'll never tear your heart apart.

Little white fawn lady, when I'm around you,

I don't know if it's true love,
But if it is true love then I might as well thank the man from
up above.

Little white fawn lady, when I'm really around you I know that
it's love.

And baby girl I want your love and heart and a lot more of
I want you to know that when the sun comes up
And when the sun goes down I think about you,
Through my dreams you're always on my mind and your
words

Are beautiful with the things that you do...

(Repeat Chorus Four Times)

DAVID DIXON We love when people can offer a tremendous amount of hope with very few words because that suggests how talented they are. This next writer offers hope with merely a title. "You'll Be Alright" lets us know that when the chips are stacked against us, there is always hope. He's writing from California State Prison in Tracy, CA, and if all his ideas are like his latest, then we can't wait for more. He truly is an inspiration and we are grateful to know there are people out there with a heart like his.

You'll Be Alright

So many people are on a search to find within their days
For that place within their minds

To hide and dump the load of this worldly life and the
things

That it can make you feel and do just to pass away your
time.

But you'll be alright

'Cause if you just hold on and be strong

You'll be alright.

People have a tendency to think to themselves
That they're the only ones going through more things than
anyone else But I bet you'll beg to differ if you would just

consider

The bigger picture

'Cause then you would see that most people go through
The same things that you do in life.

But you'll be alright

'Cause if you just hold on and be strong

You'll be alright.

Take a good look around

Look at the things and all the people.

People that you see cause we share a joy we share a pain
So it doesn't matter at all we all the same.

But you'll be alright

'Cause if you can take it you surely can make it

You'll be alright.

Don't think that you're the only one cause you're not

You'll be alright.

I know things look real hard but it's going to work
somehow

Problems may come and problems may go just as long as
you know.

But you'll be alright

'Cause if you can take it you surely can make it

You'll be alright

A Cold Lonely Cell

I think I've forgotten how it is to be free
It's hard to say if I would even survive society!
I've been locked away for so many years
I've seen grown die, I've seen them break down in tears
You see, being in prison is not a part of me
Behind these walls, you're considered weak if you show
your misery.
I've been miserable for a very long, long time,
But only I am to blame for this life of mine
You see I grew in "The Barrio" yeah the hood,
And by the age of thirteen, I was up to no good
I started ditching school and hanging with the wrong
kind of gente,
I started getting high, dressing all tumbado,
And gangbanging was always on my mente
So one night we were kicking back, dancing, just
having a ball
The next thing I know I ended up in Juvenile Hall
I used to walk those hallways with my arms crossed,
But my chin held up high,
I thought being locked up was so cool, God only knows
why?
Well, I got out of the hall and ended up in CYA.
And that's how I find myself in prison, on this cold
lonely day
You see while up in the Youth Authority I got into a
fight
The vato hit his head on the bunk and knocked out,
But he wasn't alright.
The kid died that day, but it wasn't meant to be
I was fifteen at the time, now I'm thirty-three
It's been eighteen years since I took a vida,
And besides me who suffers also? Mi madrecita querida
Every times she visits, it breaks my heart to see her cry
And she always asks the same question, why mijo
why?
The only thing that my gang got me was a trip —
straight to hell
That's how I find myself looking out of my window
Beyond the barbed wire, from my home, a cold, lonely,
prison cell...

MARCOS CASSANI

If any of you youngsters plan to keep on doing whatever it is you did to be in the situation you're in, then we suggest you read this next writer. For though it's his first time in our pages, we can already tell we'll be learning a lot from him. We like his style because he's not finger pointing saying, 'You should do this,' or 'You should do that.' Instead, he gives examples from his own life and lets the reader make their own decision on whether or not that's the life they want for themselves. He's writing from a jail in Spring Valley, CA, and hopefully we can get a Beat to him in time because we'd surely be disappointed in losing the next potential Beat Within superstar.

25 To Life

Now I lay myself down to sleep
Hoping that my cellmate doesn't here me weep
I pray to God to save my soul
As I do my time inside this hole.
I get a blanket, a towel, and if I'm lucky, a half a comb
I'm talking about this prison, which I now call home
In here it's you or them, and it better be the latter
If you're guilty or innocent to the state it doesn't matter
They're locking us up like it's the thing to do,
In California, there's 167,000 of us locked up, damn who
would of knew
So I pray to God to save my life,
Don't let me die in here, by the bone crusher knife
Whenever I'm at yard don't let me be shot
Because my pride and my faith is all that I got
I've been rotting away in a cell for so many years
Listening to my weeping as upon the ground fall my tears
I've been through so much, I can't explain
And here in Cali(fornia), we have the three strikes, which
is insane
One strike, two strikes, three strikes, your out
25 to life for stealing a candy bar, what is that all about?
In Cali, the law is no joke; it seems way out of line
I got 25 to life for a petty ass dime...

CHARLES HOLLOMAN

A first time writer is on the prowl, looking for a place for his writing to call home. Well, we're opening our doors to him knowing he'll appreciate it. In his letter he asks about contests and publishing his pieces. We do quarterly contests, so there's one every three months or so. The contest writing is on a specific topic that our editors come up with and it can be found in the editor's note on the first page. As far as publishing your poetry goes, we will definitely publish your poems and we enjoy writing that will teach us something. Whether it's about yourself, the situation you're in, or what you've been through, doesn't matter as long as you keep in mind there are many people out there reading this that could learn from your life. He's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA. Hopefully, he gets this in time to keep the fire inside of him lit. We'd hate to lose such a great poet.

Greetings

Hello, it gives me a great pleasure and I consider it a great honor to be able to write to your magazine. I am an aspiring poet as well as an aspiring writer. Your magazine was referred to me by a friend here at San Quentin. He told me that your magazine (The Beat Within) sponsors poetry contests and publishes poetry. I have, I am sending you two poems that I have created and written that I would like to enter in the contest.

If you do not have a contest or contests, then I would still like you to have the poems to publish. I am not familiar with your magazine and I do not have much money. If it is possible, can you send me an issue of your magazine? I would appreciate it very much, thank you and I am enclosing with this letter two of my poems, one is called: "A Cool Summer Breeze," and two, called: "In my mind's eye." I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

In My Mind's Eye

In my mind's eye,
I see a myriad of shapes dancing before my eyes,
Like a kaleidoscope of patterns way up in the sky.
Like the sky's lit up with yellow lanterns,
I see beautiful shapes of flowers
As well as trees and clouds,
All three twisted into different shapes on their own power,
With help from God,
Of course, in his own hour.
The shapes and patterns rise before my eyes like a tower,
But it is not just any tower,
It is a tower of beauty that is also a delight
To the (or my) eyes.
At last my soul is at rest,
Yes, I have caught a glimpse of the true God.

A Cool Summer Breeze

I love the smell of a cool summer breeze;
In the summertime, in the forest, in the park,
Or next to the ocean on the beach.
The air smells as sweet and fresh as a peach;
One that has been picked at the peak
Of maturity and flavor,
And has been sprayed with fresh clean water.
A cool smell that is a treat to the nose,
It relaxes the mind as well as the (or my) soul.
The sweet smell of fresh ocean air sun-kissed and purified
By the hand of God and nature;
There's almost nothing better

JOHNNY VELASQUEZ Writing from the California Institute For Men in Chino, CA, we bring you an incredible piece from an incredible first time writer. These new writer are knocking us off our feet with some really good thoughts. In his piece, he talks about the relationship between technology and how it makes things easier, but also brings people apart. Hell, what are we talking about? He actually describes the irony of certain relationships between many things. It's a very thoughtful piece and we're sure you'll like it too. Everyone should read this piece. It really is that good. But anyhow, we have a feeling we'll be hearing more from this great thinker.

The Paradox Of Our Time

The paradox of our time in history is that; we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers! Wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints! We spend more, but have less! We buy more but enjoy less! We have bigger houses, and smaller families! More conveniences, but less time! We have more degrees but less sense! We have more knowledge but less judgment! We have more experts, but way more problems! We have more medicine, but further-less wellness! We drink too much, we smoke too much, we spend too recklessly, and we laugh too little... We drive too fast, we get too angry, we stay up too late and get up too damn tired! We read too little and watch T.V. too much! We have multiplied our worldly passions, but reduced our values clearly! We talk too much,

we love too seldom, and hate too often!

"Check this out." We've learned how to make a living, but not a life! We've added years to life, not life to years! We've been all around the world and all the way to the moon and back but have trouble crossing the damn street. We conquered outer space, but sadly not inner space, we've done big thangs and some larger things, but not better things! We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul! We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice! We write more, but learn less! We plan more, but accomplish way less! We've learned to rush, but not to wait! We build more computers, to hide more information, to produce more copies than ever, but, again we sadly communicate less and less!

These are the times of fast foods and fast women and people with slow digestion! Big men and big women and small character! Steep profits and shallow relationships! These are the days of two incomes, but more divorce! Fancier houses, but broken homes! Quick chicks and trips throw away mortality, one night stands, over weight bodies, pills that help you feel good and cheerful, to want to rob, steal and kill! It is a time when there is much on display, but nothing in the stock room! A time when technology can bring a letter to you, and, a time when you can simply choose either to share this insight, or just hit delete?

LEO The Beat Within office is located in The Bay Area, but our writers come from all over the country. This next writer, who's writing from a Utah State Prison in Draper, Utah, received his first issue, and like most, was totally drawn to the writings of the young people we see in our workshops. Deeming himself a soldier as you'll see when you read on (he titles his first poem, "Loving A Soldier" and his second, "A Soldier's Prayer") he shows us that even the toughest of men need love. A fact that probably gets lost in all the police reports and parole board reviews, but nonetheless, it's true. So while we're fighting wars in another countries and ignoring our own problems over here, let's listen to a soldier who's battlegrounds are the very same places we all call home.

Loving A Soldier

Loving a soldier is hard they say
And loving a soldier has high prices
To pay.

It's being young and growing old
There comes a kiss and a promise to wait,
Knowing a gunshot is his fate.
It's extremely painful letting you go
While dying inside needing you so
Waiting with memories and eyes full
Of tears,

Standing alone with hopes, dreams and fears.
Loving a soldier sure isn't fun
But well worth your wait when
His time is done
So if you love him and miss him
Then tell him you do.
Cause the fact that you love
Him, will carry him through.

Put your love into their hearts
and kindness in their souls.
Help them overcome their struggles
And reach their dreams and goals

A Soldier's Prayer

Dear heavenly father listen to my prayer.
Let your light shine down on me so I still know you care.

I'm not asking for your forgiveness or your help to change

I ask that you help my familia and take away their pain.
Give them joy, happiness and endless smiles on their face.

Wrap them in your tender, loving embrace.
Give them brighter futures and forgive them of their sins.

Give them life and make them strong
Don't trust their lives to broken limbs.
Put your love into their hearts and kindness in their souls.

Help them overcome their struggles
And reach their dreams and goals
Help them fight temptations and show them right from wrong.

Give them understanding it won't take you very long.
So I hope your ears are open and my prayer you hear
Please watch over my familia and keep them in your care.

The Beat

I received my first issue much love and respects to you all for keepin' it real. Your magazine really helps to pass the tiempo. I read it from cover to cover and enjoy reading the thoughts and feelings of all the writers.

It's obvious that a lot of younger vato's and jainas are really trying to evaluate their lives and wanting to make changes for a better life and future and with The Beat hittin' back advice like you do it's no wonder why the youngsters are thinking on better levels of what life really is about and helping them to understand that the game is bogus. A bunch of false promises, twisted with demented lies from so called homeboys that forget you when you're locked down and need friends the most, Que no, the game ain't about nada. It's an endless cycle that repeats itself and ends in nothing ness. Next letter I'll share a story about this prison and fill you in on how the police act around here.

Respects

I Feel You

Hey kids, I feel you, I know how you are all feeling. My name is Casey McGuire, I'm a 28 year old male and like you my Juvy days were spent in lock up.

My crimes started when I was 7 and here I am, 22 years later sitting in the damn joint in a secure max area. I don't want to preach to you. I can't, it wouldn't be right. We're all our "own self". We make our own choices. I've written some of my views down that have helped me in my life and I wish to share them with you. Please understand these are my views, my opinions, take them how you feel they should be taken.

there is no excuse for unjustified anger, it will only bring about your downfall
be humble in everything you do, people will appreciate it more than gifts
take advantage of opportunities
be certain about what you believe and consistent in what you say
if you are polite and courteous, you will enjoy the friendship of many people
don't betray a friend for money, don't betray a real friend for all the wealth in the world
don't challenge a person who has influence, you fall into his power
never abandon old friends, you will never find a new one who can take their place
honor everyone
before you start criticizing, get your facts straight and think the matter through

CASEY MCGUIRE Wisdom is flowing through The Beat like crazy this week. We really appreciate all you BWO writers putting it down for the youngsters this week. This next writer gives about 20 lessons to live by and we read through all of them and think they are outstanding. We feel like if someone can follow these rules listed, they'll be more than successful, if that's even possible. Anyhow, he's writing from Utah State Prison in Draper, Utah. And like we said for many of this week's BWO writers, we can't wait to hear from this one again.

know what you are talking about before you speak
don't be controlled by your lust, keep your passion in check
avoid idle talk and you will avoid a lot of trouble
bad luck can sometimes lead to success and a stroke of good luck can sometimes lead to loss
speak wisely and you will get ahead of the world
don't be lazy, idle or repulsive
your speech reveals your faults
if you try to be honest, you can be. Honesty will improve your character
do not repeat secrets told to you, doing so destroys the confidence others have in you and you'll never have a close friend
don't deliberately torture yourself by giving into depression

And always remember this:
"Never, as long as you live, give anyone power over you - whether, home boy, home girl, mom, dad, wife, brother, sister, not anyone. As long as you breathe, don't let anyone lead your life for you. Keep control over all that you do, don't let gossip stain your character or your reputation."

MARCOS SORIA Poetry can surely be the language for the heart and this next writer is extra fluent in that language. Fighting a 'serious case' as he puts it in his piece he wrote in Spanish, he still finds time to be forever someone's as you'll see in his poem to what we believe is his girlfriend. He's writing from the Santa Clara County Jail in San Jose, CA. Hopefully he keeps our address tucked away in a safe place because we'd like to be updated as to what happens with him. Keep writing these lovely pieces.

Mi Storia

Yo soy Mexicano, Nacido on Michuacan pero criado en San Jose, Cal. Tengo 2 hijos, Angel 3 anos, Kanina, 2 meses. Pero por andar en malos pasos cay en la Carcel. Usaba Drogras, "Crystal." Me arepiento mucho por que me dejo la mujer que queria. Solo me queda esta vida carcelera. I aprender de mis errores. Estoy joven, tengo 21 anos. Peliando un caso muy grave. Espero algun dia salir. I cuando eso pase voy a luchar por salir adelante. I dale todo a mis hijos. Para que no les falte el amor de un padre. Pero necesito ayuda del Beat para aserlo.

Forever Yours

I'm forever yours...
Because when you hold me,
I feel like nothing else matters
More than the love.
I've found with you

I'm forever yours... because when you
Look at me, I can see how much you love me.
Your eyes tell me the closeness we share
Is something deep. Something we could have
Only found with each other. I'm forever yours...
Because there is something. Special in the way we
Trust each other so completely. I'm forever yours...
Because only with you I can picture a moment
Where I know what it's like to feel heaven,
Only with you have I ever felt so safe, so loved
I'm forever yours... because...
I wouldn't want it any other way.

My Story

I am Mexican, born in Michuacan but raised in San Jose, Ca. I have two kids, Angel three years old, Kanina two months. But for walking in the wrong steps I ended up in jail. I used drugs, "crystal." I regret it a lot because the woman that I loved left me. The only thing left is this incarcerated life and I learned from my mistakes.

I am young, I am 21 years old fighting a very serious case. I hope to get out one of these days, and when that happens I am going to fight to come out ahead. And give to all my kids. So the love of a father is not missing. But I need help from The Beat to do that.

WILSON GERALDO From way across the country at the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, we bring you this first time writer who says he's interested in our magazine and also in the work we do. He also sent this next elegantly written poem so now he's a part of the family. The more you write the more Beats we'll send. So the best way to stay a subscriber is to stay a writer. Let us hear what going on in your head and heart and we'll gladly remain as consistent as possible as far as sending Beats go. Can you send us some more? We really enjoyed this one...

September Storm

The ungodly is upon me.
The start of a wicked season.
The four winds have been gathering.

And the tides are high.
Yet I remain unruffled.
Alone.
And confined.
Let it pass I say.
It is only a shadow.
Destructive...
...But only, for a moment.
Heaven will spawn from the wreckage.
And create beauty again.
Yes, infinity lives.
Despite my sunless state.
My hope for infinity in wide awake.
So let it pass I say again.
For my heart holds the eternal gem.

ANONYMOUS WOMAN Here's a knock out piece in its original form from 2003, issue 8.05. The following is one hell of a powerful testimony of the life too many women (and even men) endure from within the walls of the prison system. This courageous woman drops mad game on us readers on what goes on daily in prison. Her courage touches us and makes us admire her "grace, integrity, and beauty" while she puts up with such shhh from the trash whom she unfortunately must live with. This anonymous woman writes us from Valley State Prison for Women in Chowchilla, CA.

A Typical Day In Hell

Another day, another year in hell! I dream of the day I parole, a typical day in Valley State Prison for Women.

I got up at 6:00 AM and started getting ready for breakfast and work. I've been observing how the sickness and mentality in here works. One or two people try to control everything so the room revolves around them and everyone else has to take their shhh. One person ends up being the victim or scapegoat.

I (being who I am) refuse to take their abuse and I stand up and speak out. Then the two who want control, go to the other ones in the room and start treating them "nice" — giving them rollies (cigarettes), coffee, or whatever!

Ha! I'm observing and I laugh. I put on my headphones then I get up and start dancing. Now they are fuming because I have rhythm, and I look at myself in the mirror and say, "I love you. You are so beautiful." Now you see smoke coming out of their ears, and I glance over and I see an ugly scowl (which is envy and hatred) and I smile to myself. Eat your hearts out girls.

I'm totally disregarded in here as though I don't exist. They smoke but won't give me a light, so I pop the socket with a broken stinger cord. Ha! They want me to lie on my bunk and never move, smile, laugh, or talk. I'm not supposed to get up and turn on the water or the light, to get ready for work. I'm supposed to walk on eggshells.

Last night I was verbally, emotionally and mentally abused, called a broke-down, indigent tramp and a bitch because I don't shop canteen. I don't use drugs anymore, so there's no use for me in here. When you're indigent, you're supposed to bow down to the ones who aren't. They perceive that they are important 'cause they buy cans of Bugler and other generic government trash that they buy from the same people who keep them in their prisons. Also who sells them their drugs to keep them their victims. They talk horrible about other races and then buy dope from them.

I am not allowed to sit at either of the tables in this prison room because these tables belong to them. They earned the right to sit at them because they paid everyone in the room a rolly to let them feel important in prison. Can't get control anywhere else so prison has to do. They aren't used to anyone messing up their program, so they cling together like a pack of "Chihuahuas." Ha! When the porter comes around with the sign-up list for phones or laundry, I'm totally disregarded in that also, so I have to jump up and stand at the door or I would never get to wash my clothes, just to hear one of the control, clean freaks "sigh" with disgust, that I'm not bowing down or pleading with her to treat me human.

As I'm sitting here writing, she's spraying disinfectant all around me, and turned off the light. Ha! I got up and turned it back on. It's hard to breathe with these toxic chemicals all over me, but this is prison. They try to push me to stoop to their level of ignorance, but I stand strong with integrity, beauty, and grace. Sometimes it's hard. I can see why some people resort to violence. I have stood up to rooms full of these sick humans "by myself." Little me, all 5'5" of me, 148 lbs. Well, I think I'm 142 now. I can't help it. I've never been fat and sloppy, but I love it that I'm so beautiful. I will not apologize or hide who I am to appease anyone to make them feel safe and unthreatened. These are their issues and burdens, not mine. Now she's really fuming because I'm sitting at "her table." We happen to be fogged

in, so I can't go to work, and as far as they're concerned, I should be laying on my bunk until they say it's OK for me to move around, which would be after they sit here at "their table" for 3-5 hours before they decide to take a shower in "their shower." Hang towels and shhh on the shower door, so no one else can take a shower until their 3-5 hour table time is up. One of the women in here asks about every move she makes. They even tell her to take her shoes off, when to stop sleeping so much, and when she can have a light off of their rollie.

Depending on who you're in a room with, you may get beat up by one big bullie, or a couple of little ones who have to gang up. You can get clocked with a combination lock or cut with a razor, then threatened if you say anything to anyone. They'll break your legs and tell everyone you're a rat. More intimidation, fear, control, tactics. Now they are sweeping dirt on me. Anything to try to get me to react and take on "their misery." Go ahead. Spray me, sweep shit on me, just don't put your hands on me. I really hate to go there because I'll lose my date and as quiet as I've kept, when they gang up on me, I'll be forced to tear "their" prison room up, and "their" prison tables, and other shhh would be broken. Then "they" would go "tell" the "po-lice" that I did this. Ha! Now who's the "rat"? But they'd never see it that way because these are their control, manipulation moves!

And I, a monument of "grace, integrity, and beauty," see how I ran most of my life and numbed my pain from this kind of abuse. I see how I felt I couldn't stand up and overcome this horror, this cruel inhumanity, this disgrace from sick, depraved human animals! I acknowledge my emotions, and I feel it all; the anger, the fear, the hurt, the sadness, the humiliation, the persecution, the loneliness, the helplessness, the pleading and despair in my prayers that never receive any answers, only more struggles to endure and obstacles to overcome. I never complain in here about my health or my inner battles. I stand up and fight for me with dignity. Sometimes I cry when I know they can't see it. Big tears roll down my face and it makes me relax a little, but I'm always tense and on guard for the next attack; be it verbally or otherwise.

I see people walking with two black eyes. I stare at them, looking to see their pain, and I don't see it. It's as though they don't know that it's not OK to be abused. It's part of their present/past/future mentality! They get points for enduring that abuse. The points meaning, "check her out, she can hang!" What a sad, miserable, disgusting, existence! That's what they live for. That's how they survive. The police don't care. If they don't like you, they'll make sure you're in a room where you most likely will get beat!

After this gets printed, you may never hear from me again! Ha! It doesn't do any good to have a good heart or to be honest. They will retaliate and you'll suffer more persecution. Well, I've chosen to keep my heart and my honesty and I can't turn my back in here. They're mad because I'm doing something with my life and they aren't. I guess after always being a victim, it's very uncomfortable to come out of that, and if others sense that, they will try to keep you in the role you're supposed to play. It's like climbing a ladder and an angry mob is at your feet, grasping to pull you off the ladder! My neck is sore, arms hurt, chest hurts, shallow breathing, and this shhh makes you look different. When I'm at peace, I look soft and pretty. When I feel hurt or afraid, I look washed out! They are trying to keep me from shining. The darkness can't put out the light. I'm not giving up my fight for me and my freedom from these shackles. I'm not running away anymore. I'm not numbing me, although I still get the urge to say, "What's the use?" I'm walking this and it feels crazy! But I believe in a creator, and I believe I was created for life, love, happiness, joy, peace, and freedom. So, I walk there knowing one day, I'll be free. . .

Judgment Day

I remember the ominous sound of the steel shackles rattling against the linoleum floor, echoing down the long hallway forewarning everybody of my approaching presence. I remember taking one slow, painful step after another down the seemingly endless corridor to my awaiting fate. I saw lawyers, DA's and other personnel of the

Criminal Justice System cross my path into offices and courtrooms, diligently working like busy bumblebees. I remember being able to smell the various disinfectant agents used to clean the building, the after shave of the Sheriff Deputy escorting me, and a myriad of other odors, clinging to the morning air. I heard the buzz of people quietly conversing, lawyers debating, pages of books being furiously shuffled; the usual drone of a workday at 850 Bryant.

Although I heard and saw all this from a close and personal perspective, it all seemed so far away. It was as if the invisible sound waves, intoxicating smells, and rich vivid images were being projected to me from the end of a long tunnel. Everything was so distant.

My mind was a thousand miles away from my body. It was situated in abysmal space, viewing the rest of the world from a safe vantage point where society's oppression or hideous atrocities couldn't encroach upon.

As I shuffled along the hallway, I felt inexplicably calm and at ease. The inner turmoil and anxiety that had been instilled in me for the past 13 months ceased to exist. Maybe it was because I had instinctively known what was going to be the probable outcome of this hearing. I am still not sure.

However, I finally reached my destination; I turned and entered Department 23 - Judge Bryan B. Williams' courtroom. I was ordered to sit down, shackled from head to toe, and wait for Judge Williams to appear so that court may be called into session.

For the next 30 minutes or so, I sat staring at the judge's podium. No matter how many times I saw it, it always continued to fascinate me. It was made out of thick oak, veneered with a glossy layer of lacquer. I could still see the beautiful grain of the tan wood through the clear coating. Even though the golden podium stood in one place immobile, it imposed an aura of absolute authority and power.

Then finally, my lawyer showed up and commenced to tell me what was going to happen in court. As my attorney was quickly explaining to me how Prop. 21 had made my sentencing term more complex and difficult, we were interrupted by the Deputy Sheriff inducting, in a stentorian voice, the Honorable Judge Williams into Court.

He strode into the courtroom in long strides, head held high as if he owned the world. He was proudly attired in a black gown, the uniform of a judge. He was fairly young, tall and somewhat lanky. He was not a handsome man although not ugly. He had a self-important air about him. As he climbed the steps to his pedestal and carefully sat his 6 ft. frame into a leather chair, I thought, "Phunking Ivy League white boy."

I waited a little impatiently for another 30 minutes or so as Judge Williams presided over some cases that preceded mine on the scheduled list for that day.

"Alex ____, case number..."

After 13 months I had finally reached the last stage of my court process. It was finally my turn to stand before the judge to have my heart weighed against a feather. It was finally my judgment day.

ALEX

Here's another stellar piece from 2000, issue 5.42. We are happy to welcome back Alex aka 383 to the pages of The Beat Within. Alex was one of our strongest contributors in our workshops in SF/YGC. He is currently awaiting placement at the CYA in Sacramento. As always, his writing is both powerful and heartfelt. In the following piece he take us for a painful ride way too many people are familiar with, "Judgment Day." We look forward to hearing more from him soon. We also suggest you use a dictionary for words that you do not understand.

I stood up from my seat, and suddenly my emotions hit me with the force of a speeding freight train. A twisting whirlwind of confusion swept over me blowing my mind away. I couldn't think rationally or see properly. Everything was a blurred spinning madness. I couldn't breathe. I was suffocating. I was drowning in a sea of trapped emotions.

I closed my eyes shut and took a deep controlled breath of air. When I opened my eyes again, I was somehow standing next to my lawyer in front of the judge and his majestic pedestal. Judge Williams was saying something to me but I couldn't hear it. My mind had once again ascended to its safe haven. Then gradually, his deep voice, crossing vast stretches of lands and oceans, reached my ears.

"... charged with 1st degree robbery..."

Slowly, I became aware that my mind had suddenly become a reel and was playing an abridged movie of my life.

In the movie, I saw myself as a baby born slightly different from any other normal baby. Due to the premature birth, the baby was born with a slight hearing problem.

"...convicted of..."

The baby was now a young boy desperately trying to fit in at school, but was ostracized by other students for the fact that he had hearing problems. The young boy would always come home to a family missing two vital members, the mother and father. But, he understood they had to work in order to keep a roof over his head and food on the table.

"...2nd degree robbery by plead..."

Unable to find acceptance, extra attention, and that special attention at school or home, the young boy turns to the forbidden streets.

"...behalf of the Court, I sentence..."

The young boy is now a young man. By selling drugs, fighting, robbing people and other illegal activities he has been accepted in the streets despite his innate shortcomings. After awhile, in spite of the extra love and acceptance he has found on the streets, he is confused, angry, and insecure about his future. But he is addicted to the glamour of the fast life and feels that he cannot change.

"...3 years..."

The young man is now locked up in jail. After much thinking, he has decided to change. But he knows he must first face the consequences of his foolish actions.

Directions On How To Build A House Of Happiness

To build a house of happiness, first, lay down a strong foundation of unconditional love. Next, set up a sturdy, un-swaying framework of loyalty. Now, build and put up thick, impregnable walls of security. Then, to top it off, lay an impervious roof of unrestricted freedom. Finally, but not least, fill in minor details of austere discipline.

Throughout the construction of this house of joy, there are a few things you must remember. You must remember to encourage the construction, therefore expediting its growth. But at the same time, have unlimited patience, for good things should not be rushed. Also, keep faith in the goodness of the house; the faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains. Hope for the best, then surely you shall dwell in the house of happiness forever.

MICHAEL OROZCO This next piece comes from issue 4.27, the year 1999. The following piece you are about to read was accompanied by the magnificent art, titled, My Half World, which was also featured on the cover and back page of The Beat Within 4.27 issue. The rest is written as it was read back then... We are very grateful to share this priceless work by our dear friend and colleague Michael Orozco. Michael is currently housed in the SHU, California State Prison Corcoran in Corcoran California. It is Michael's mission to teach and educate the readers of The Beat. Much love and respect Mike!

Gambling with life

Where does gambling with fate lead to? Like the toss of a coin you chance a 50/50 stake in a wager. Chances are head or tails. Chances are...

What this world of prison bars and razor wires has to offer I'm well aware of. As I'm aware of what the free world has to offer. Yes in spite of my existence here in solitude there's a synthesis of two worlds. I've got my four thick walls that act as an enclosure in more ways than one.

I've also got my television that gives me a peephole to the world. So, even though I'm confined of body, of mind not so much so.

There's a whole different world out there... I know about Kosovo and Serbia and ethnic cleansing. I know about political instability and economic concerns. I know about Chiapas and indigenous struggle throughout those regions, and of governmental clamps down, and its armed fist. I know about the Clinton and Bush's, campaigns; senatorial and presidential. I know about the recent shooting drive-bys tragedy in Chicago where once again racial prejudice has reared its ugly head. And of a railroad killer being over exposed on the nightly news. Doesn't the national media love a racial element to its lead story? Just wondering. In sports I know that recently the San Antonio Spurs introduced the Twin Towers and company as new NBA champs. That in Baseball Sammy Sosa's smacking 'em and that Jose Canseco's not too far behind. A '99 version of the Latino Home Run Derby. That the (Cleveland Indians) tribes serving notice to all. And finally that not only do we have Wild Wild West the movie, but a National League version as well, though my beloved Los Angeles Dodgers are just a footnote to this story.

But closer to home and lots closer to my heart the beat goes on with my family. There are marriages, births, separations, up and downs; revelations of a varied assortment. I don't know the half of it, but splashes of insight are enough.

Now after all you have read it appears that I'm well informed and knowledgeable in worldly and family events. But pull back that appearance of knowing and what's revealed? Who am I? What am I? And more importantly, what's to become of me? There are questions in the questions.

Pessimism lives up to a distant horizon. I am one man at the gate of two worlds. I know the joy of freedom and the cruelty of incarceration. Be where I may there exists these two worlds. My soul bears the scars of this division. Once you've made the acquaintance of these four walls it becomes so difficult to shake them. Do you feel me?

Closer to here the free world exists. I could see it through the fences. There! Out there beyond that street! But looks can be deceiving because those "streets" are well out my grasp as my current status dictates. There are "dates" and

required good conduct to obtain such dates. Good time, bad time, one third time, half time. Familiar terms. But for lots there is no such thing, not when you have life, or double life, life without (parole). For them, time is just that time. A calendar becomes a cruel reminder of things never to come. I imagine that? Having life without the possibility of parole; bottom line; you take your last breath in prison! Some proposition, but it's happened to lots, many more that I can't even write all of their names on this page...

But back to this four walled confine. Once you've been in here it's like you've been cursed. For now on you'll forever be waging a war to not come back, if you want to stay out you'll wage a war fought one smart battle at a time.

Once your in here you are at the mercy of a release date and you can't leave until that comes. But once your out it is your freedom indefinite. Just don't forget that it's easy to come back and that your just a hand cuff away from all of this.

These places have many names to disguise what they truly are; placement, juvenile hall, camp, boot camp, youth authority, correctional facility, training center, prison. It's all the same. How do I know? 'Cause it's my story starting at the age ten in juvies to now, state prison at the age of 34.

It's all good out there with the women, cars, and the lifestyle filled with the pride of a young Mexican intoxicated in freedom, family, and enjoying my union with a fine young female, the birth of my son, etc. Growing up strong in a family and church, nothing uncommon to the atypical young Mexican. But then it could be a case of being to presumptuous and the next thing you know you've crossed over into ignorance.

Being an ignorant Mexican was never my intention, and I'm not, but at times when I've let my guard down it's happened as can well be attested too, by my present address.

Now I live in a world of cold cement, bars, razor wires and of armed guards, administrators, correctional officers. Of control button doors, of being hand cuffed to everywhere all of the time. In there is the air of death all around. Reminders are everywhere there are signs. Warning no warning shots, or a CO armed with an assault rifle eyeing our every out of cell movement. Then there's the lethal electrified fence meant to deter escapees to their very coffin.

Death is presence all around in the form of many guises and it's accompanied by this lumbering giant of a beast, this dragon that is the state of California, it encloses all about me and exiles me to these deathly walls and to a lonely existence deep inside to my bones.

So how to survive all this? Be strong and smart. Persevere, not just through iron will, but through knowledge. Be knowledgeable to what's on both sides of this spectrum. Don't leave your fate to chance. And remember that there's always two sides to a coin.

Out and about in the free world you flip a coin, heads you win, tails you lose. In here, heads or tails you lose, there are no winners. So quit taking chances, grab fate, your fate and become a winner through an education and by being involved with family. Don't leave your fate to the toss of a coin.

Once your in here you are at the mercy of a release date and you can't leave until that comes. But once your out it is your freedom indefinite. Just don't forget that it's easy to come back and that your just a hand cuff away from all of this.

El System de La CYA

Bueno soy Jesus aka Chubby from San Mateo. Esta vez directamente le escribo desde C.Y.A en Sacramento. Bueno no es mi primera vez escribiendo para el Beat. Pues unos días atras escribí unas líneas sobre la vida de cholo que viví. Pero esta vez les escribo con mucho respeto.

Estas líneas que voy a escribir es sobre mis pensamientos del systema de este programa. Ahorita estoy en mi cuarto escuchando unas canciones en mi radio. Saben que locos yo soy un pandillero de San Mateo que esta haciendo tiempo por problemas que pasé. Todos piensan que las pandillas es un juego que no te afectan en ningún modo, pero chale, no es así. Yo no soy nadie para decirles esto pero pensandola bien las pandillas no te van a dar nada sólo tiempo, tiempo que se va a quedar en el pasado.

Saben locos, yo soy un vato que esta puesto para todo, pero aquí en mi cuarto les escribo estas pocas líneas con mis ojos llenos de lágrimas, sólo desiendo que la piensen bien en sus decisiones que tomen. Yo aveces quisiera haber sido un juez para poder mandarlos a programas que en verdad los ayude para que vayan, a sus casas con una nueva mentalidad. Yo sé que esto es sólo un sueño que no puedo hacer que se haga realidad.

Algunos amigos tienen poder que hacen que los sueño queden atras, pero locos no dejen que ese poder destruya tus sueño. ¿Me entienden?. Yo sé que quieren divertirse, ir a fiestas. ¿Por qué en vez de bailar tienen que fumar? ¿Por qué en vez de reir tienen que odiar? ¿Por qué en vez de trabajar tienen que robar? ¿Por qué en vez de dormir tienen que quedarse despierto toda la noche? Yo sé que es muy fuerte darle vuelta a la vida en un minuto. Yo sé porque traté, pero no se den por vensidos, homies sigan tratando.

Yo ahorita estoy laqueado por una pelea que tuvimos ayer, pero esa fué mi desición. Aquí en CYA no es ningún juego. Yo ya he estado aquí dos veces. Aquí estas con locos de 15-25 años de edad, estas en tu cuarto 23 horas al día. Si quieres ir a la escuela tienes que ganarte la oportunidad, no puedes hablar con vatos que no sean de tu barrio o raza. La comida vale verga, son puras tonterías que te dan todos los días. Si no tienes dinero te mueres de hambre.

Yo no quisiera ni deseo que nadie este en este lugar. Yo voy a estar aquí por otros tres meses y me voy para otro lugar por un año. Homies habran los ojos no somos más que un numero que vale dinero. Lean la revista del Beat, lean los que los demas escriben e piensen por lo que los ellos han pasado.

A penas ayer ablé para la casa de mi jefita no estaba, pero mi carnal contesteo y le pregunté por mi jefita he me dijo que andaba con mi tio porque mi carnala Ramona había venido del México a vernos. Yo no sabía nada de eso, pero al escuchar mis ojos se llenaron de lágrimas. Me sentía vergüenza porque tengo 6 años que no miro a la carnala. Pero siempre que viene siempre estoy encerrado en este pinche olho. Yo estoy seguro que para la otra vez que mi Dios nos de la oportunidad para que nos abracemos.

La vida es muy dificultosa pero te da oportunidades e decisiones que ignoramos. Buenos homies yo sé que a lo mejor estas pensando o diciendo que soy un padre de iglesia dando su sermón, pero estas cosas se las digo con mucho respeto y con los ojos llenos de lágrimas. A lo mejor oyendolas de un vato que estas haciendo tiempo en un lugar que nadie desea estar las entiendan.

Para finalizar les quiero decir que estoy enamorado de una guerita pero para mi mala suerte ella esta haciendo tiempo también. La quiero mucho y si Dios quiere que la proteja. No les digo adios si no hasta pronto.

JESUS Here's a grand effort from the 6.27 issue. This one in all its originality comes from the year 2002. Jesus, formerly a workshop participant in San Mateo, is now writing us from NRCC/CYA in Sacramento. We appreciate this incredible effort, and look forward to hearing more from him. Jesus has plenty to say, and we have the platform for him. For those of you who do not read Spanish, check it out, it's translated in English too!

The CYA System

This is Jesus aka Chubby from San Mateo. This time I'm writing you straight up from CYA in Sacramento. Well, this is not my first time writing for The Beat. I wrote a few lines about the gangster life that I lived a few days ago. But this time I'm writing to you more respectfully.

These lines I'm about to write are about my thoughts on this system and my program. Right now I'm in my room listening to some songs on my radio. You wanna know, I'm a gangster from San Mateo who is doing time for some problems I went through. Everyone thinks that a gang is a game that doesn't affect you in any way, but damn, it's not like that. I'm not nobody to tell you this, but if you think very carefully, you'll realize that gangs give you nothing but time, just time, a time that will remain in the past.

You know what man, I'm a guy ready for whatever comes up, but I'm here in this room writing you these couple lines with my eyes full of tears, just wishing you could think about the decisions you're going to make. Sometimes I wish I could've been a judge to send you to places where they can really help you — homes with a good new mentality. I guess this is just a dream that won't come true.

Some friends have power to make your dreams stay behind, but don't let that power destroy your dreams. Do you understand me? I know you want to have fun and have parties, but why smoke instead of dancing? Why hate instead of laughing? Why rob instead of working? And why stay up all night instead of sleep? I know it's hard to turn your life over in a minute. I know because I tried, but don't give up my friends keep trying.

Right now I'm on lockdown because we got into a fight yesterday, but that was my decision. Here in CYA, ain't no joke. I've been here twice already. In here there are people of ages of 15-25, you're in your room 23 hours per day. If you want to go to school you gotta earn the opportunity to attend to school. You can't speak with someone who doesn't belong to your 'hood or race. They give you BS as food every day. If you don't have money for food, you'll die.

I don't want, and I don't even wish, for anyone to be in this place. I'm going to be here for a few more months, and then I'm going to another place for a year. My friends, open your eyes, we're nothing but another number that's worth money. Read The Beat Within newsletter, read what other people share about themselves.

Yesterday I called my mother but she wasn't home, but my brother Ernesto picked up the phone and he told me she went out with my uncle to see my sister Ramona who just came from México. I didn't know a thing about that, but as soon as I heard that, my eyes got full of tears. I felt embarrassed, because I haven't seen her for six years. Every time she comes, I'm always locked up in this messed up hole. I'm pretty sure that for the next time she comes, God will give us the opportunity to hug each other.

Life is very difficult, but it gives you opportunities and decisions we ignore. Ok my friends, even though you might think I'm a priest giving his sermon, I'm saying all this to you with respect and with eyes full of tears. Maybe hearing these words from a guy who's doing time in a place where no one wishes to be in you'll understand.

To end this piece, I want to share with you that I'm in love with this girl, but the worse thing is that she's doing time. I love her a lot and I hope God protects her. I won't say bye, but I'll say until later.

I'm not nobody to tell you this, but if you think very carefully, you'll realize that gangs give you nothing but time, just time, a time that will remain in the past.

When I'm at peace, I look soft and pretty. When I feel hurt or afraid, I look washed out! They are trying to keep me from shining. The darkness can't put out the light. I'm not giving up my fight for me and my freedom from these shackles. I'm not running away anymore.

check out the rest of Anonymous' BWO piece on page 56

